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THE THREE PASSIONS.

BY THE

Author of "Sweet Eglantine," "Evander," &c., &c.

CHAPTER IX.

Jos. : I dare not think thee guilty of dishonour.

Wes. : Dishonour!

Jos. : I have said it.

Wes. : Let us hence:

Let us to our chamber.

Jos. : Yet one question—

What hast thou done?

Werner.

On the day following the events related in the last chapter there was a report in Deal that Mr. Cecil Ives and his cousin, Sir Harry Daubarn, had gone out in the steam launch, "Ariel," belonging to the former, and that a collision had occurred between the steamer and a fishing-boat, the latter having been out in half and sent to the bottom, while one of its occupants, Walter Tottenham, was drowned; the other, Dalton, being luckily saved.

This account, though varying according to the fancy of the narrator, was substantially the same in all cases. That Walter was drowned no one doubted, and the "Clock House" was literally crammed all day long by persons eager to hear the details of the accident from the pilot's own lips.

He entirely exculpated Mr. Ives from blame, and stated that Walter had taken a wrong course. His grief for the loss of his young friend, as he called him, was painful to witness, and every one gave him credit for possessing a most sensitive heart, which beat with generosity beneath his rugged exterior.

There was one person in the town who heard this news with bated breath and an indescribable thrill, for she knew that the terrible words of Mr. Ives had been fulfilled, and that she was indeed a widow—her married life had been so short as to resemble a dream. Scarcely had she passed an hour in her husband's company and Anthony came to tell her that he was dead.

Every search was made for the body of the unhappy young man, but without avail; no trace was

[CHICKTON AT THE "BRITISH AND FOREIGN."]

found, and it was supposed that it had been carried out to sea. The boundless ocean—that ocean he had loved so well—was his grave. Grace was pleased that the sea would not give up its victim, as she was thus saved the painful necessity of attending his funeral.

She waited with impatience all the morning for the visit which she knew Cecil Ives would pay her. If Walter had been less scrupulous he would have been alive then. Cecil had not hesitated to commit a crime, and his reward was the hand of Grace and the chance of obtaining the thousands of Solomon Tulse.

The afternoon came, and Grace paced a shaded walk in her little garden, impatiently expecting the man whom she had, with fiendish cruelty and cunning, made her dupe and her tool.

In the shop her mother was busy in attending to her customers, selling small articles and stamping letters to be ready for the carrier when he called for them.

Grace was feverishly anxious; she knew that she was the accomplice in a detestable crime, of the facts attending which she wanted to be enlightened. Dalton she had seen in the early part of the morning, for a minute only, and he had whispered in her ear, "He is dead!" and that was all.

As she stood in the shop, pretending to be busy behind the counter, she heard the gossips of the place drop in to make some small purchases and retail their news to Mrs. Ebury. It was there she gleaned meagre particulars respecting the tragedy at sea; but of foul play no one had any suspicion.

At length the garden-gate opened, and Mr. Ives appeared. Grace retreated into the summer-house, where she would be free from interruption or observation from the windows of the adjacent houses, and Cecil followed her. Since their last interview it was for her to command and for him to obey.

"Tell me all," she said, speaking in a hoarse voice, and repulsing him with her hand as he approached to kiss her.

He looked apprehensively around him, and, in a low tone, informed her of all that had happened, adding as he concluded his recital:

"It was Harry's hand that struck him down, not mine, though the plot originated with me and Dalton. I have not the man's blood on my hands."

"It matters little how or by whom the deed was done," replied Grace; "all I want to be sure of is that there is no chance or possibility of his returning, as he did on the first occasion when his life was attempted."

"I will answer for that," rejoined Cecil, with a grim smile.

"Then, taking the fact as accomplished, let us quit a disagreeable subject for ever and talk over our future prospects," said Grace, in a decided tone.

"With all my heart," he exclaimed.

"I fear, Cecil," she continued, "that you will think me a terrible woman of business, and not so loveable as when you first looked upon me with the eyes of love; but this is a time for action. We must not be idle, for inactivity at this crisis may lose us all."

"That is true, and it being my turn to speak let me ask you when you will make me the happiest of men; tell me, dearest Grace, when I may call you mine."

His voice trembled with emotion, and it was evident that all his old affection for her, which had lain dormant for nearly two years, had cropped up to the surface again and come out like a vigorous flower in full bloom.

They were sitting side by side in the arbour, concealed from view by the climbing eglantine and the fragrant honeysuckle. He had grasped her soft white hand, which he pressed tenderly between his own manly palms, looking up lovingly in her face meanwhile.

"We will go to London to-morrow, you, I, and Dalton, and be married before a registrar, which is, I have heard, an expeditious process," rejoined Grace. "If we remain here our wedding will be the talk of the town, so let us go away."

"I am entirely in your hands," Cecil Ives said; "anything you suggest I am perfectly willing to agree to."

While they were talking they were joined by Dalton, and a long conversation ensued, the result of

which was that all three should go to the metropolis, concealing their destination from every one, even Mrs. Ebury, to whom Grace was to write when the marriage had taken place.

In spite of an instinctive delicacy which had hitherto kept him silent on the subject, Mr. Ives could not refrain from alluding to the order to receive Solomon Tulse's money which Walter had given Grace in such a confiding manner, which trust she, traitress that she was, had so infamously betrayed, instead of holding it sacred as she should have done.

Dalton being present, she did not hesitate to show her lover the order, which satisfied him as to its existence, and he did not doubt its genuineness; but Grace declared that she would make no effort to go and claim the money until the marriage had first been solemnized.

Of course the hope of possessing so large a fortune was the main inducement for Cecil Ives to marry Grace, and both she and the pilot knew this very well, but he exclaimed:

"I will not oppose you in anything, my darling, because I do not wish to marry you for the sake of the money. If that did not exist, I have a handsome income of my own, which is quite sufficient to enable us to live in comfort, if not in splendour. Come what may, you shall not say I am mercenary."

Grace smiled.

"A pretty woman, Cecil," she rejoined, "is never the worse for a good dowry, and a large fortune has often made the ugliest obtain a husband when she would have died an old maid had she been penniless. This is no reflection upon you, however, and you must forgive me for talking of the fortune, for where the treasure is there will the heart be also."

The journey to London was undertaken as arranged, the little party of three stopping at an hotel, Grace representing Dalton as her father and Mr. Ives as the gentleman to whom she was engaged to be married.

A certain residence in town was necessary before the marriage could take place at the registrar's office, and this term was spent in seeking amusement.

Grace had not been to London before; she was consequently moving in a new world as it were. Everything was new, and everything had the charm of novelty, which to a woman is intensely captivating.

A new place, a new face, a new bonnet or dress, will render most women happy. So it was with Grace. The various public buildings and sights of London were exhausted in the daytime, while the evening brought with it the hour at which the theatres opened, and not one day or evening did she spend quietly at her hotel.

At length they were married.

Grace Ebury became Cecil Ives's wife according to the law of the land. Callous as she was she could not help thinking of the only former occasion on which she had heard the solemn words of the ritual. Then Walter was standing by her side, gazing upon her lovingly. Now Mr. Ives looked upon her with admiration rather than with love, and she had the painful consciousness that there was an interested motive in what he was doing.

"Now, darling, you are mine for ever," whispered Cecil as he led her from the registrar's office in which the ceremony had taken place.

"Now for the fortune which I bring you, and for which you have married me, Cecil Ives," she answered, in a hard, cold voice, so different from that of a young, tender-hearted, and blushing bride. "Now for the hidden thousands of Solomon Tulse."

He smiled faintly, and his cheek brightened with a flush of pleasure and expectation, somewhat similar to that which illumined her own ordinarily pale face.

They got into a hired brougham and drove, as had been arranged previously, to the office in which was to be found the secretary of the company in whose funds Solomon Tulse had years before invested the money he had with much labour and foresight amassed in India. Heaven alone knew how hard he had worked in his young days to accumulate the thousands which it was, after his death, the highest object of Grace's ambition to obtain—heaven alone knew how he had sinned, and how he had oppressed the poor natives of the burning East, when he bought himself into a position of power, trust, and emolument in order to scrape together his thousands.

Leaving back upon the dingy cushions of the carriage, Grace looked up into her husband's face. Dalton was on the box with the coachman, and conscious only of the success of his scheme so far. They—the conspirators, the murderers of Walter—were on their way to claim the reward of their villainy.

"We are man and wife now, Cecil," Grace exclaimed, adding, with a wild laugh: "Are you not proud of the alliance you have made? You ought to be, for I am an heiress."

"I am very happy when I think that you have

called into existence and given new life to the feeling of love with which you first inspired me two years ago," replied Cecil Ives, "and if you were the poorest of the poor I could only love you as I do now."

"That is hypocrisy, Cecil—you know it is," rejoined Grace. "Our union was a mere commercial transaction. You bought me as simply and purely as an article is bought and sold over the counter of a shop. If you love me, so much the worse for you. I loved you once, but your insults killed that passion long ago, and every time your lips meet mine in a kiss I shall think of the time when I pined for your kindness and would have given worlds for one syllable of affection. That's past and gone. In me you have the heartless woman of the world, yet not heartless, for in my heart I shrine the treasure which we are going to enjoy together in our several ways. My soul trembles with a wild joy, for I shall be a queen of society. You are a gentleman of family and position, and as your wife I am admissible anywhere, even in the highest circles. I will be presented at Court; ladies of rank shall envy me my diamonds, the beauty of my dress, and the splendour of my carriage; all London and Paris shall ring with my name; I will lead the fashion—yes, where I go the flower of the English aristocracy shall be pleased to follow like a flock of sheep!"

She became quite eloquent while she spoke, and Cecil regarded her wonderingly, as she had not deigned before to open her mind to him to such an extent as she had then done.

"Will the achievement of all that you have been describing make you happy?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. It is the passion of my life," she answered.

"I had dreamt of something very different," Cecil Ives said, with a sigh. "A house in the country, a life of comparative seclusion, where we might live for one another and not for the society you admire so much."

"No," answered Grace, with a shake of the head, "I was never made to live like a love-bird in a cage."

The carriage stopped in the centre of the busy City. Crowds of men were thronging the pavements and hurrying to and fro, absorbed with their own thoughts and their several occupations.

No one would have thought from their appearance or attire that the plainly dressed lady and gentleman who stepped out of the dingy brougham had been married not an hour before. There was not even a bouquet or a white favour to indicate that anything of the sort had taken place, and the black silk dress which Grace had on was one she had worn at Deal during part of the spring and all the summer, until critical eyes would have pronounced it shabby. Both of them had an essentially business-like air, and it was clear that they had not come into the City for pleasure.

Dalton opened the door of the brougham and handed Grace out, watching her go up the steps of the old house by the side of her husband, whose arm she disdained to take. She had the heart of a lion and was strong enough. The passage was dark, and it was nearly half a minute before her eyes, dazzled by the blaze of the mid-day sun, could accustom themselves to the dim light of the hall and corridors of the old house. Seeing "Secretary's Office" written over a door, in paint which had once been white, her heart gave a bound, and she pushed the door open. Cecil followed her as if he had no will of his own, and was obliged to acknowledge her as the guiding spirit which in reality she was.

CHAPTER X.

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break.

Macbeth.

FINDING herself in a room where several clerks were writing, Grace addressed herself to one and made certain inquiries, which brought her the information that the secretary of the company was disengaged and would see her husband and herself.

The secretary sat at a table in a plainly furnished room, with piles of books and papers before him; on the walls were maps of India, and bookcases filled with volumes relating to that distant land so fertile in romance.

He was a little gray-headed man, probably sixty years of age, whose tanned complexion and dry, wrinkled face showed that he had been exposed to the force of an Asiatic sun.

"In what way can I serve you, madam?" inquired this gentleman, rising, and politely placing a chair at her disposal.

"Mr. Ives, my husband," she answered, "is a relation of a gentleman lately deceased who resided at Sea View, near Deal. Pardon me if I am somewhat prolix, but I must enter into detail in order to make myself understood. The gentleman of whom I speak was named Solomon Tulse, and he had in years gone by been a large holder of your stock."

"He was so at his death," said the secretary, who, at the mention of a familiar name, seemed to take an interest in his visitors which he had not exhibited before.

"You have heard of the melancholy event," observed Grace, with an inward tremor for which she could not account.

"I was duly advised of it," was the answer.

"Well, to go on with my story," continued Grace, "Mr. Tulse has made my husband his heir—that is to say, he has given him an order upon you which entitles him to receive the money you have in your hands, the exact amount of which I should like to know if I am not troubling you too much."

The secretary opened a heavy, vellum-covered book, held together by iron clasps, with a lock and a little key in the centre. This was full of figures, and, consulting a particular page, he said:

"The amount now standing in the name of Solomon Tulse is no less than four hundred and ninety-seven thousand some odd pounds, which is very little short of half a million of money."

"Thank you," replied Grace. "Now I will show you the order, which contains these words."

She took a purse from her pocket, and, opening it, displayed the order which Walter had confided to her care, spread it out on the table before her, and read, in a voice that, in spite of her admirable self-command, trembled with uncontrollable emotion:

"Pay to the bearer at sight all the money standing to my credit, after sale at price current, of stock held by me in shares of the Honourable East India Company. To the secretary. Signed: Solomon Tulse." That is perfectly formal, I believe," she said when she had concluded.

"Perfectly," replied the secretary.

"And you have no objection to pay upon it?"

"I should have had none if—"

"If!" repeated Grace, in a tone of alarm, allied to terror, while her face became as white as a sheet, and her limbs trembled as if she were suddenly stricken with the palsy.

Her agitation was shared by Cecil Ives, who up to this time had been a silent though deeply interested listener.

"You cannot dispute the validity of that document, sir!" he exclaimed, feeling it incumbent upon him to say something.

"I have no wish or intention to do anything of the sort, Mr. Ives," replied the secretary. "I was about to explain myself when your good lady interrupted me. The order is perfectly valid, but, unfortunately, I am unable to give you the money."

At this announcement the mortification, disappointment, and rage of Grace culminated. She could not speak; all she could do was to sit still and glare savagely at the secretary while she clenched her fists, driving her nails into the soft flesh of her hands, unconscious of the pain she was involuntarily inflicting on herself.

"Your reason?" demanded Cecil Ives.

"On the evening before his death Mr. Solomon Tulse wrote to me, the letter being brought by a lad who said his name was Chickton, and was employed at Sea View. I daresay you know him—"

"Yes, go on!" replied Cecil, hoarsely.

"Mr. Tulse in his letter gave me strict instructions not to pay the order which you have brought with you until the lapse of ten years."

"Ten years!" echoed Grace, in a sepulchral tone.

"That is the period he fixed, and he further said that he had signed two orders for the payment of the money, one having gone out to India, being dated prior to the one in England, and he enjoined me only to pay on the production of both orders simultaneously in ten years' time. Have I made myself intelligible?"

He looked from one to the other to see the effect of his speech. Mr. Ives was prostrated, but Grace, being made of sterner metal, was able to recover herself, though her heart was devoured with rage.

"The arrangement is very extraordinary!" she exclaimed, "and I cannot imagine Mr. Tulse's reason for acting in so singular a manner. You, however, have only to obey your instructions, and we must wait for the promised inheritance."

"I cannot advise you, madam. You are the best judge of the course of conduct which you ought to pursue under the circumstances," replied the secretary, coldly.

"Have you the letter in which Mr. Tulse's latest commands were brought to you?" she inquired, "and, if so, will you allow me to look at it?"

"I am sorry I cannot comply with your request," he answered. "It is contrary to our custom to expose important documents, though your solicitor shall have every facility for investigation, if he will call upon me. The facts are as I have had the honour to state to you. In ten years' time any person presenting the two orders at this office will receive the half-million of money with the accumulated interest, either from me or my successor, should I not be alive."

"Any person?"

"Certainly. We pay upon the orders, not accord-

ing to the appearance of the station in life of the person applying for payment. Those orders are like a cheque on a bank. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Nothing; allow me to thank you for your courtesy. I will send my solicitor as you suggest; his visit will be merely formal, but it is as well to have every matter of business conducted with strict regularity."

"Certainly."

The secretary bowed, and opened the door for them to pass out, which they did at once. The clerks in the outer office looked wonderingly at the pale and haggard woman who hung upon her husband's arm with a convulsive tremulousness, her fortitude giving way now that all was over and she could fully realize the force of the crushing blow she had received. It was scarcely credible that she could have become so changed in those few fleeting minutes. She had entered the office full of hope and confidence, she left it broken down and crushed to the earth.

No word was spoken by either of them as they retraced their steps to the hired carriage, at the door of which Dalton was standing. Grace required to be lifted in.

"What is the matter?" inquired Dalton, terrified. "Tell the man to drive to our hotel; get inside with us, and you shall hear all," answered Cecil. Dalton did as he was ordered.

"Now, what is it?" cried he, eagerly. "Not the money? There's nothing wrong—no hitch—for Heaven's sake, don't say there's any hitch about the money!"

"There is though, my friend," answered Cecil Ives, and he explained what had passed between them and the secretary.

"What's to be done?" exclaimed Dalton, as crest-fallen as either of his confederates. "Grace! why don't you speak?"

"Oh, don't talk to me now," she answered; "my head swims. I shall go mad if I am worried. Let me get home—let me have peace, then I can think and I will tell you what's to be done."

She relapsed into her former condition of listless apathy.

"There is but one thing to be done, and that is—wait," remarked Cecil Ives, who was more of a philosopher than his wife in those trying moments. "We must bide our time. Ten years are a long time, but even ten years must glide away."

"It seems to me that old Tulse must have fancied Walter was dead when Ponder and Ellis caused his fall over the cliff, that is what made him send Chickton to London with the letter; and it is my opinion that he gave the lad money, and instructed him to seek for this son in India to whom the first order was evidently sent. Our chance of getting the money is small indeed."

"Is it?" exclaimed Grace, starting and sitting upright, with the air of a dead thing galvanised into life. "I swear, by all I hold dear, that I will never give up the chase after the treasure—I will work and slave to get it till my hair grows gray—I will leave no stone unturned—I will halt at no means, however infamous. You do not know me if you think that I will abandon my cherished scheme because I have met with a check. Never, never, never!"

She spoke with such emphasis and decision that both men regarded her with admiration, but the energy she displayed was transitory, it was like the flickering of a flame which is on the point of being extinguished, and when she ceased speaking the light died out of her eyes, her hands fell powerless by her side, and she lay huddled up in a corner of the carriage like one in a faint.

"I shall go back to Deal and work for my living as I did before," said Dalton. "In ten years' time you may see me in London. Whatever happens, of course the secret is safe with me. No one will ever know how Walter came to his death, or why he was wanted out of the way."

"As for me," remarked Cecil Ives, "during the ten years which have to elapse before there is any chance of Grace's ambition being gratified I will try to make her love me."

"Love you!" repeated Dalton, in a scornful tone; "as well might you expect tenderness from a cobra or warmth from a stone."

A hard, cold smile played round the corners of Grace's mouth. She had heard these words, and she approved them. Cecil Ives noticed this chilling smile, and his heart fell within him, for he began to see that he had married one who was pitiless as a demon.

CHAPTER XI.

Should old acquaintance be forgot

And never brought to min'

Should old acquaintance be forgot

And days of lang syne!

Burns.

TEN years after the visit of Grace and her husband to the office in the City, where such a severe disappointment had awaited them, had, with the exception of a few weeks, elapsed.

It was again the joyful summer time. London was full, and its weary citizens sought the shaded side of the way, so that one side of the busy Strand was nearly deserted while the other was crowded with people, who pushed, and elbowed, and jostled each other.

This being the case, it struck the observer as remarkable that a tall, handsome man, about five or six and twenty years of age, should by choice take the hot side of the street and walk unconcernedly along, as if the sun of an English summer was so trifling a matter as not to be worthy of his consideration.

A man, who looked very much like a servant out of place, was lounging, with his hands in his pockets, at the top of Arandel Street, that side of the Strand being the sunny one, and he, red in the face with the heat, was grateful for the shelter which a projecting doorway gave him. When the young man stopped to look in a shop window the longer caught sight of his face, and was apparently struck with a remarkable likeness to some one he had known, for he exclaimed:

"Well, I never did! If the face isn't as like as two peas, only of course he's bigger."

"What's that you say?" cried the young man, turning sharply round, and adding, almost immediately, "You are right. I'm bigger, but there is enough of what I was left to enable you to call me to mind, for, altered as you've become in ten years, I can recognize Snarsby, the coachman at Sea View."

"I knew it was you, I knew it was old Tulse's lad," cried the longer, extracting his hands from his pockets and seizing both of the other's, which he shook and squeezed by turns. "They said you were dead, but I never believed it. Where have you been all this time?"

"That's a long story, which, however, I shall be glad to tell you if we can get out of this sun. I have only just come back from India, having arrived at Southampton last night. The sun is a good thing, which it is possible to have too much of."

"Come to my house, it's only a few doors down," replied Snarsby. "You must know that old Tulse left us all a handsome legacy, and it was because you did not claim yours that they said you were dead. I married Martha, who lived cook at Sea View. You remember Martha—of course you do. Many a bit of cold meat and a hunch of bread has she given you. You've a right to remember her. Well, we went and got married, and, clubbing our money together, bought an hotel in this street, 'The British and Foreign' it's called, and if you haven't a fancy for where you're stopping you may as well give us a turn. We're clean, comfortable, and cheap. The three C's the missus calls it—her ideas were always a little above mine. I wanted a public-house, but she set her face against a public, it was low she said, so we went into the hotel line. But, I say, what a fine, tall, handsome fellow you've turned out, quite a gentleman too—dressed as such, with rings and watch-chain. Let's have another look at you."

Chickton smiled, and presently they stopped in front of a quiet-looking house, the outer door of which stood open, leaving a carpeted space leading to a green baize door, with a fan-light, on which was written, in brass letters, "Snarsby's British and Foreign Hotel, for Families and Gentlemen."

The ex-coachman led the way into a cool dining-room, in which were several tables, covered with snowy white table-cloths, at some of which customers were dining, two waiters in irreproachable white ties attending to their wants.

"Come and sit down here, my boy," exclaimed Snarsby, indicating a quiet corner. "The missus is cooking and mustn't be disturbed. You remember what Martha Palliser's temper was when put out—well, Martha Snarsby's no better."

He looked round furtively, as if he feared that some mischievous wind would carry his words down the shaft which communicated with the kitchen, in the event of which happening he would not have been surprised to see his wife coming up this particular shaft instead of the plates and dishes.

A bottle of claret and some ice were brought by a waiter, and Chickton, having quenched his thirst, said:

"My story is simply this: Mr. Tulse had invested a large sum of money, of which no mention was made in his will. This sum he designed for his son, who was born in India, and of whom we had never heard. He wrote an order for this son to get the money, and sent it out to India, having forgiven Syed—that is his name—for offending him years ago. He then wrote a second order, which he gave to Walter Tottenham (as we used to call him), and commissioned him to seek out Syed and tell him of his good fortune, so as to make doubly sure."

"Poor Walter!" ejaculated Snarsby.

"Why do you say that? Is he not—"

"Dead, sir, dead!" rejoined the ex-coachman, with a melancholy shake of the head. "He was out in a boat with Dalton, the pilot, and Mr. Cecil Ives's

steam launch, the "Ariel," ran them down. Walter was drowned, and the pilot saved. That was the very day of Mr. Tulse's death."

"So he's really dead!" exclaimed Chickton, in a tone of commiseration. "The second attempt was successful; the first one—which you knew nothing of—failed, though its failure was not owing to any want of determination on the part of Ponder and Ellis. I heard of his miraculous escape from a sailor, who saw him in the morning. Well, I was telling you about the orders. There is no doubt that Walter was killed for the possession of the one which he had had entrusted to him, and Mr. Tulse thought, the night I went away to London, that it would be wise to tell the secretary of the company where the money is not to pay for ten years, and then only on presentation of both orders together."

"Capital!" exclaimed Snarsby, rubbing his hands. "I can see now why Mr. Ives married Grace Ebury. It came out through her mother talking that she had been married to Walter in Jersey. From him she got the order of which you speak, and Cecil Ives married her for the money."

"Oh! that's news!" observed Chickton. "Those are the people to fear. That they have given up all idea of getting the money I do not believe for a moment, but, while I live and have my wits about me, they shall not have a penny."

"That's right; I like your spirit!" exclaimed Snarsby, "but you have not told me about the son."

"I went to India in search of him, hearing at Calcutta that he had left that city to go to England a month previously, and Mr. Tulse's letter was at his late house. I took it, and, as it contained the first order, that important document is now in my possession. Syed was a married man. The ship, which contained his wife, his son—aged eleven years—and himself was wrecked. The wife and child were saved, and landed at Southampton. That I know, but I have lost all trace of them. The father might have been thrown on the African coast; that is a matter of conjecture. At all events, I am trying to find, not the son, but the grandson of Solomon Tulse, our old master."

"If you succeed will he get the money?"

"Undoubtedly. Our arrangement about the two orders was to prevent the enemy obtaining the treasure, but the company have promised to pay the order I hold if I can produce either the son or the grandson of Solomon Tulse, they being alone entitled to it."

"I wish you every success, I am sure!" said Snarsby, "and, if there is anything I can do for you, name it, and it is as good as done. You shall stay in the house, and pay no rent, and—"

"Thank you for your kindness," Chickton answered, with a smile; "fortune has smiled on my efforts, and I am now tolerably well off. When in Calcutta I entered a merchant's office, worked hard, and when my employer retired from business he gave me a handsome sum of money, with which I speculated on my own account. I have left a flourishing business in India to look after Solomon Tulse's grandchild, because I swore to him—dying as he was—that none but his own flesh and blood should have the inheritance."

"You will find the grandchild," said Snarsby, who was of a sanguine temperament; "I feel sure of it! Have some more wine—it's quite like old times to sit chatting like this."

"Nothing more, thank you. I must go to my agents in the City, and by sunset I will arrive with my luggage, family, and attendant."

"Family?" remarked Snarsby; "you don't mean to say you are married and have a family?"

"There is no reason why such a thing should not be an actual fact, but I am not a married man, though I have adopted—under peculiar circumstances, which you shall some day hear—the prettiest darling you ever saw. Amine is my pet; you shall make the young lady's acquaintance, when I am sure you will be as fond of her as I am. My attendant is a tall, strapping fellow from Upper India—a Sikh. I saved his life, and he is devoted to me. I know he would give his own for me at any moment if I demanded it. His name is Chowdar; he is body-guard, and the chief business of his existence is to wait upon Amine, on whom he dotes as much as I. You see you will have to give us an extensive suite of apartments."

"We can do it, sir!—the resources of the establishment are not limited; we shall make you comfortable, and I hope the freedom with which I have spoken to you has given you no offence," said Snarsby.

"Certainly not. Whatever respect my position in India entitles me to, with you I am always the stable-lad at Sea View, who used to ride the mule into Deal for the letters, and help you groom the horses," answered Chickton, kindly.

They shook hands once more, and Chickton departed, leaving the ex-coachman wiping a tear out of his eye, and saying to himself:

"He's come back to find out the heir to the money—what a fine fellow!—and he'll do it too:

he'll never let the Ives lot get the treasure. The blessing of Heaven will go with him! He's just the man for the work, and I can tell that he will not rest until he has fulfilled the vow he made to Solomon Tulse when the old man was dying."

(To be continued.)

DISSOLVING THE OLD FIRM.

"THERE goes a fine catch for some girl. I wonder he has remained a widower so long. It is over three years since his wife's death. Dear me! I should think his must be a very lonesome life."

"Now, Jane Austin, it is not a bit of use for you to sit at that window and watch Captain Arden as he passes. He will never marry you, or any other woman. His life is devoted to his daughter. And, as to being lonesome, I expect for the little time he is on shore he'll find enough to employ his mind and time. So you need not feel a bit uneasy about that," returned a sister spinster, who, at one time, had spent many hours watching the handsome captain, but long since had adopted the prevailing opinion that Captain Arden would never marry again, he never having been known to spend an hour in a woman's society since his wife's death.

A few moments after the above conversation Captain Arden entered the reception room of a young ladies' seminary. Scarcely had he seated himself when his neck was encircled by fond, clinging arms, and a sweet, childish face pressed close to his. After returning his darling's caresses Captain Arden looked earnestly for a moment into her beautiful eyes, then asked, with great anxiety:

"What is the matter, my love? Something is troubling you, I see. Why are your eyes not dancing as usual, and why is the music all gone from your voice? Come, tell papa what is the reason."

"Oh, papa, you love me better than anybody in the world, do you not?" the child sobbed.

"Indeed I do, my own."

"Oh, papa, papa, but will you always do so?"

"Why, Flory, little girl, what do you mean?" her father asked, amazed by her agitation.

"Oh, you do not say you always will. And it is true what the girls all tell me. You will find somebody else to love. Oh, you cruel papa! you will marry somebody some of these days; then your poor little Flory will only have a little mite of your heart."

"You silly little love to let these girls tease you so. Come, we will make a solemn compact, Flory. Now give me your hand, and look right into my eyes. Now I promise never to wed any woman, or to seek to win the love of any, as long as my daughter remains true to her father. While you are with me, giving me your entire love, I ask for nothing more. We will live for each other, Flory. What say you? Will you promise this too?"

"Gladly, gladly, papa," Flory answered, with another fond embrace.

Then, with a doubtful look, she asked:

"But, papa, you only mean that I must not care for any man save you? That is it, is it not?"—a bright flush mounting to her fair brow; "because, papa, I do love Ada Foster dearly. She was one of my schoolmates last year; now she is one of our teachers. I love her very much, particularly now that her father is dead. That is why she stays here to teach. She is an orphan, papa, and so sweet; and she is so good and wise too! older than I—by nearly five years—and—"

"Very well, Flory, you can love your friend Ada as much as you choose; but do not let me hear of any other love. And this voyage I shall make to sea will be the last, my child. By the time I get back, two years hence, you will be old enough to preside over our home; then we will be separated no more. So you must learn all you can, little one, against that happy time. Now rest easy about your father's heart. It will never wander from his darling."

Flory was very beautiful, and numberless brothers and cousins of her companions cast admiring eyes, and sought to win some sign of favour from her. But all to no avail. So when the two years had passed by, and Captain Arden returned to his child, both, after an inquiring glance into each other's eyes, were fully satisfied that no other love had entered the heart of either.

A year passed by and nothing happened to mar Captain Arden's or Flory's happiness. At the end of that time a young man came, bringing a letter of introduction from his father, one of Captain Arden's dearest friends. This young man was not only welcomed with great cordiality, but Captain Arden insisted that during his stay in the town he should become his guest.

Thus it was that Fred Fulton was thrown into the constant society of Flory, who had all her life had a passion for black eyes and raven locks.

And there was Fred, just such a hero as all blonde girls are sure to dream about. Then he had such

a touching, taking sadness with him that went straight to Flory's kind, sympathetic little heart. But, to do her justice, it must be told that she fought bravely against the spirit that came stealing over her, and really either would have kept herself away from him or sent Fred off home had not the duties of hostess prevented.

The next best thing was to get some one else to come and help to entertain her guest.

Ada Foster had, a few weeks previous to Captain Arden's taking his daughter from school, been sent for by an aged relative to come and live with her. Thus the friends had been separated.

Often Flory wished that Ada could be with her, saying:

"Then I should not think so much of this dark-eyed stranger."

Just then Ada's aunt died, leaving the orphan girl in possession of quite a large fortune.

How Flory rejoiced, not only in her friend's good luck, but more in her freedom. Now she could come to her, be again daily her adviser and confidant. So she wrote to Ada, begging her to come. And she came.

But, alas, for Flory's thoughts about banishing Fred from her heart—daily he grew dearer! And now the poor girl upbraided herself for ingratitude in thus allowing any stranger to share the heart that should belong entirely to such a devoted father as hers.

Fred's visit was drawing near its close. A few days previous to his leaving he found Flory alone, and told her his heart's story. But, poor fellow, his hopes received a very sudden check. Flory dismissed him—solemnly declaring she should never marry.

So Fred went away very miserable; and Flory's bright eyes grew sad, and her merry voice ceased its chattering about the house. Her father grew very uneasy, and declared she must be ill. So, to relieve her father's anxiety, Flory feigned a happier mood. But somehow her efforts were of little avail. Captain Arden's jokes grew less frequent, and his merry, ringing laugh was seldom heard. Even Flory's winning little ways failed to satisfy or make him happy.

Truly a wonderful change had come over the once happy little household.

"What is the matter with Flory?" and "What troubles papa?" were the thoughts which agitated the minds of father and daughter.

Ada Foster was the only wise one of the three. She knew well enough what the trouble was with the captain, as well as Flory. For how could she mistake the devotion of Captain Arden's manner to herself? Many times, when suddenly raising her eyes, she had seen his gazing earnestly and admiringly on her. Then quickly they would seek Flory, and, with a sigh and a deprecating look, he would leave the room. Yes, Ada understood all about the trouble, and resolved to put the minds of her friends all right. Their hearts were just as they should be. She rejoiced in the discovery she had made, for the weeks she had spent in the society of the captain had revealed to her such true nobility of character that she had grown to think of him with feelings which no other man had ever inspired. Yes, Ada loved him. She did not try to deceive herself about it. So, to save four persons from misery, she resolved to bring Flory to her senses first, and trust to chance for the captain following in the same course.

One evening, when out for a drive, an opportunity was presented for Ada to "open Flory's eyes," as she said to herself.

They were nearing a fine old mansion, to which Flory pointed and said:

"What a grand old place that is! How I should like to own it."

"I think it a very gloomy-looking place, and would like a home of more cheerful aspect," replied Ada.

"Well, it has a very gloomy look. But then there are strange folks living in it—only an old bachelor and old maid. They seldom have visitors, and only live for each other. The servants speak of their being the saddest couple ever seen," said Flory.

"I do not wonder. I've heard the story of those poor, mistaken folks, both having sacrificed their hearts' best love for the sake of each other, blindly thinking they should find happiness, or, if not that, content in doing what they called duty. This unnatural way of living never brings either, only years of disappointment and ceaseless regrets."

"Oh, Ada! Can it ever become so with papa, or I?"

"Flory, I must answer your inquiry by another. Are you happy now, in the sacrifice you are making?"

"I may be by-and-by," answered Flory, trying to repress the sigh which would come nevertheless.

"I think not, Flory; neither are you making your father or poor Fred very happy."

"Ada, tell me; what is the matter with papa? Does he suspect my heart has wandered a little from him? Yes, it is this, I know, which makes

him so sad. Oh, how ungrateful I have been! Dear, good, noble papa!"

"No, Flory; it is not your love for Fred that is troubling your father, I am quite sure. Have you never thought that perchance he, as well as you, may have taken some one else to share his love?" asked Ada, a delicate blush suffusing her face.

"Papa's heart given to another! No, no; he would not break his pledge to me—"

"No more than you have with him, Flory. But you see how it is, little one. We cannot regulate the impulses of the heart. Love will wander whither it chooses; and I think it is the contest against this that is causing all our trouble just now."

"Our trouble, Ada? Are you unhappy too?" asked Flory, looking inquiringly into her friend's eyes.

"Only—because of my dearest friends' unhappiness."

Flory had fixed her eyes very earnestly on her friend. She continued to gaze for some minutes, then light seemed to dawn upon her. She caught Ada's hands in hers, exclaiming:

"Oh, I know now! How blind I've been! Oh, I'm so glad! so very, very glad, Ada! Hush, don't say another word! We shall all be so happy now!"

"Stop, you madcap! What do you know?" asked Ada.

"That I'm going to have James turn his horses' heads towards home. I want to put my arms around papa's neck, tell him my secret, and win his—"

"And betray another's, Flory?"

"No, no. I've grown very wise at last. You darling Ada!"

A very little while after Captain Arden sat in his library, looking anything but happy. A sigh had scarcely escaped his lips when his neck was encircled by Flory's arms. And she asked, with a comical little smile:

"Papa, what is the reason you and I are not just as happy as we used to be?"

He drew her within his arms, and said:

"You are sure we are not, my darling?"

"Perfectly so, papa."

"What can I do to make you so, my child?" he asked.

"By being so yourself, papa."

He shook his head, and was about to reply, when, burying her bright head in his bosom, she murmured low:

"Papa, do we not both of us want to dissolve the compact we made years ago?"

"My darling, what can you mean?"

"Oh, papa, you know! Do not you and I want to take in new partners?" she said, breaking into a merry laugh, which was finished in a shower of happy tears.

As if by magic, the clouds were banished from his brow, and the happy, genial-looking man of a year before said:

"So this little traitor heart has taken another in to crowd me out, hey?"

"No, no, papa. I love you none the less because I've learned to love—well, just as you love somebody else."

"What a wise little woman you have grown to be, Flory!"

"Yes, papa; I know now that you and I will love each other all the dearer by dissolving the old agreement and entering into another, where no sacrifices will be required."

"Who is my rival, little one?"

A whisper close to her father's ear, with a smiling approval from him, then, with a very grave look, she said:

"Ada leaves us next week, papa."

"No, Flory. Can you let her go?" he asked, the sad look coming back.

"Yes, papa; if you will make her promise to come back and remain for ever!" Flory answered, smiling.

Catching her quickly, and pressing her to his heart, Captain Arden went out. Flory heard him enter the drawing-room.

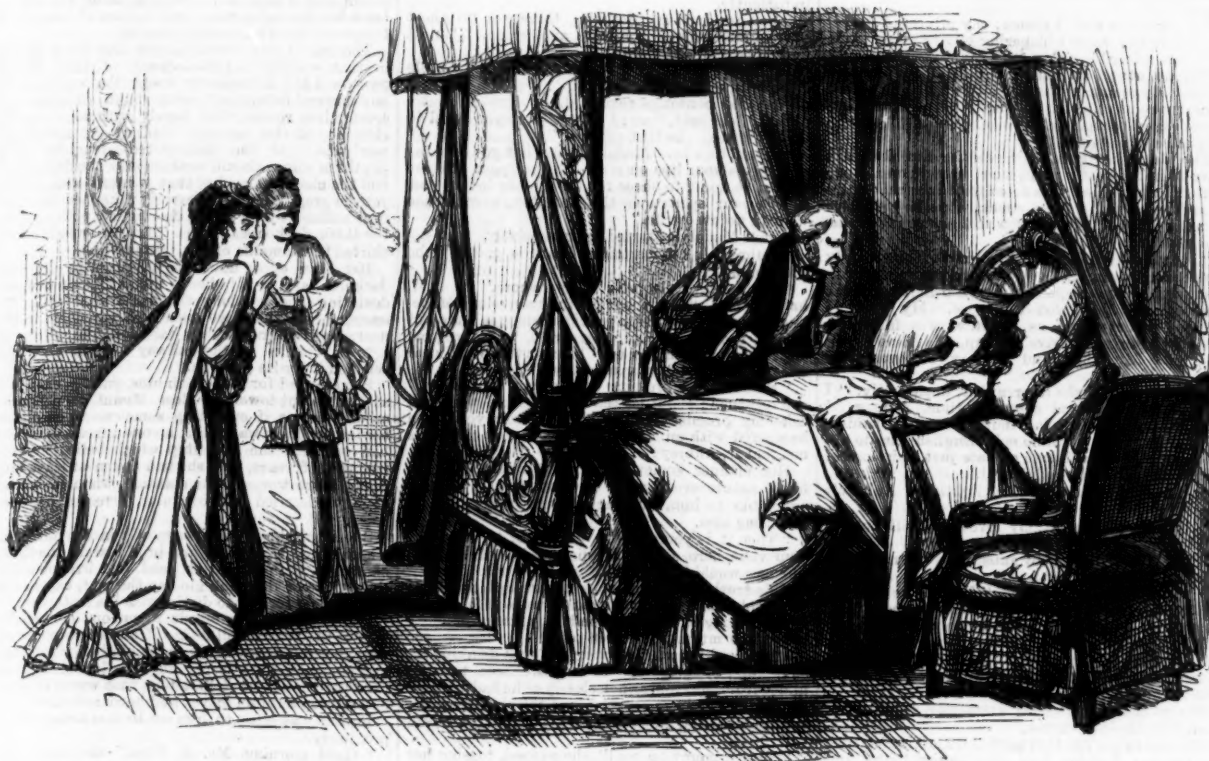
An hour after he returned, drew her with him to Ada's side, and said, his voice full of joyful emotion: "She has promised, Flory. Help me to thank her for making us so happy."

Flory's arms were about her, her lips pressed to hers.

That evening a little messenger was despatched to Fred, bearing from Ada just one word, "Come."

After a few weeks more the new partners were united in a firm compact, which gives assurance of the purest happiness earth can afford. F. H. B.

END OF WAR.—What, after all, is the end of most wars? Nothing but this—that a number of elderly gentlemen meet together, in an official room, and, sitting round a table covered with green cloth, quietly arrange all that might just as well have been arranged before the war began.



[THE BRIDE OF DEATH.]

THE SNAPT LINK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Sybil's Inheritance," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c."

CHAPTER IX.

Rest, rest—oh, give me rest and peace;
The thought of life that ne'er shall cease
Has something in it like despair,
A weight I am too weak to bear.

"HILDA, good night! It may be for the last time."

The fair bride elect was passing along the corridor to her apartment, on the eve of her wedding-day, when this salutation greeted her.

Turning with a sudden start that decidedly endangered the lamp she carried, she met the dark, gloomy gaze of Rupert de Vere.

"Oh, Rupert, how you frightened me. I did not know you were in the house," she said, still trembling from the unexpected vision in the dark loneliness of the distant wing, where the ladies' apartments were situated at Rose Mount.

"I scarcely imagined you would ever bestow a thought on such an insignificant circumstance," he replied, bitterly; "yet it is a thing of life and death to me, Hilda, whatever it is to you."

"Dear Rupert, do not talk so wildly, you terrify me," said the girl, turning white as her own light robe. "It makes me quite sad to think of your being unhappy, but indeed I cannot help it, Rupert. And you will soon forget me—I mean, in the way that distresses you," she added, with a bright blush restoring the bloom to her cheeks. "I do wish you could like Gertrude, Rupert; you would be so happy, and so would Aubrey, and I, and papa too."

He grasped her hand till the pressure actually pained her, and there was a fierce, ominous glare in the eyes that well nigh burned into her face. Then he dropped her white fingers with a remorseful sigh. "I daresay you mean kindly, Hilda, but it is kindness that drives a spirit like mine to frenzy. Of course it is not your fault that a worthless popinjay has stolen your heart by his fair, serpent-like seeming, and, of course, you cannot help the dark stain your father's malice casts on my mother's fame. I comprehend it all—all, Hilda, and I can bear it as a Stoic; only do not insult me by disposing of the two Pariahs of your household as you would cast off pets of whom you are weary, lest it kindles up the hot rage I have seared over so carefully."

There was such a bitter mockery in his manner that Hilda anxiously glanced round, in a strange, timid desire for some footstep, some sound that might end this painful interview, and the look did not escape the keen observation of her companion.

"Do not be impatient, Hilda; I will not detain you, and it may be the last time your eyes will ever be offended by my unwelcome presence, or your peace disturbed by my wrongs. Say farewell, and I am gone."

"Farewell? Shall I not see you in the morning?" she faltered, shrinking involuntarily from his nearer approach.

"No; did you expect I could calmly hear you speak vows of love to another, see him embrace you as his own, and listen to the cuckoo congratulations on—my woe! Never! I have lingered, I could not tear myself away while you remained still free. I was mad enough to hope that the delusion might cease. Now all is over, and I shall be far away from here before the bells toll the knell, Hilda, the death knell to happiness—and—life."

He had taken her hand once again in his, he cast the other arm suddenly round her, and, clasping her to his breast, kissed her with a vehemence that terrified her, till she could scarcely smother a cry that would have fatally exposed the whole wretched episode.

But she restrained the impulse, and, in another instant, warned by a light sound of approaching footsteps, or the uselessness of farther colloquy, Rupert disappeared within a recess that concealed a staircase that led from the servants' room to this part of the mansion.

It was a wing that had been added by the present owner, as a more modern and attractive abode for his fair heiress and her cousin than the more antique rooms of the old house.

"Why, Hilda, what on earth is the matter?" asked Gertrude as she joined her cousin in the large dressing-room, now fairly strewn with jewels and robes, and all kinds of bridal attire. "You look rather as if you had seen a ghost than like a blooming bride elect."

"Gertrude, I have been so frightened; Rupert met me and talked so dreadfully about farewells, and death knells, and despair, that I feel as if I were going to be buried instead of married to-morrow!" gasped the pale and trembling girl thus addressed.

"You must forgive him; he is desperately wretched, but I trust your marriage may convince him of the necessity for conquering his passion," said Gertrude, her own lips quivering with a pain far keener than Hilda's trepidation.

"I should think he might have felt that long since. He surely did not suppose Aubrey and I were going to jilt each other," returned Hilda, half pettishly. "It is too bad for him to torment me like this, just when I ought to be happy, with nothing but all this to think of."

She glanced round at the wreath and veil, and

the splendid parure which had been presented to her as her wedding gift by the bridegroom.

"Hilda, what makes you so irresistible?—what fairy was at your birth?" exclaimed Gertrude, with a kind of bitter playfulness. "You win hearts which are unsought, and you are literally loaded with all that any human being could imagine of happiness."

A sad shade swept like a fleeting summer cloud over the brightness of the bride elect's sweet face.

"Did we not learn in our childhood about some old cynic who said, 'Call no man happy till he dies'? Perhaps my trouble and grief are all reserved for me, Gertrude, when you will be gay and flourishing. But," she added, "I really must not go on in this fashion or Aubrey will be ashamed of me to-morrow. I will send you off and ring for Martin; good night, dearest Gertrude. I trust some day to witness your happy bridal."

She embraced her cousin with a warmth that, in spite of her utmost efforts, was but coldly returned by the less-favoured child of the ancient line which had given them both birth.

"I feel sadly nerveless. Do not be surprised if I were to pay you a visit in the night, Gertrude," was Hilda's parting exclamation. "But I must send away such silly fancies, and try to sleep on roses," she added, kissing her hand, and blowing a playful kiss to the departing cousin.

Another hour or two, and all was quiet in the mansion of Rose Mount.

Every one had retired early in anticipation of the excitement which awaited them on the morrow, and each arrangement had been so diligently completed that nothing remained for principals or domestics to detain them beyond their usual hour of rest.

The grave tones of the massive hall clock had sounded one—a full hour since the very faintest vestige of lights or sounds had disturbed the profound silence of the mansion.

Still a subdued, veiled light shone in one of the "ladies' apartments," one watcher strained her sense of hearing to the very utmost to catch some expected sound, and fixed her eyes on the door, which had been left slightly ajar so as to prevent any noise on turning the lock.

At length the girl's anxiety was relieved so far as the suspense was concerned.

A step, so stealthy that she could scarcely trace it, even while expecting its approach, came close to the door, which was noiselessly pushed open, and a man's tall, slight figure glided like a revenant from the grave into the room.

"Aubrey—at last," murmured the watcher, rushing into his extended arms, and nestling to his

breast like a tiny bird. "I thought you would never come."

"I dared not risk it sooner, my princess," he returned, in the same whispering tones; "and even now it is a terrible risk we are running, Madeline."

"None, none," she said, "if we be quiet and cautious. My apartment is divided from Hilda's by a dressing-room and also an empty chamber, and Gertrude's is quite on the other side. Besides, they were fast asleep long since."

She drew her guest towards the fire that still burned in the grate, and placed herself on a large fauteuil where there was room for her small figure to recline as if it were a couch, while he sat down on a low ottoman at her feet with a glance of genuine and passionate tenderness.

"How lovely you look, Madeline! You are fifty times more charming in that scarlet wrapper, with your satin tresses as your sole ornament, than in the most splendid toilet you can devise. My jewel! I worship you even yet as if you were a fairy empress. I can never give you up, Madeline; you need not fear that, and it may be even now that—"

"Hush, hush!" she interrupted, impatiently. "I am not to be deceived a second time, Aubrey. I despise myself for this last indulgence of the vanishing dream. But I am no cold English girl to observe proprieties and love or hate just as is correct according to Mrs. Grundy's will."

A silver yet elfin laugh rang lightly on Aubrey's ear.

"But, my Madeline, my love! you will not desert me! I cannot live without you," he said. "Hilda is but a cold, icy substitute for my warm Southern—"

"Aubrey," she interrupted, "did it never occur to you to dread what would be the consequence of your deception? Did you never dream of the resentment of such Southern blood as mine?"

"I confided in your love. I knew that mine was as true and intense as your own," he replied, his eyes burning with passionate admiration which no ordinary charms, however attractive, could have kindled in his *blond* breast.

She was exquisite, that perfect little Titania, with her varying flushing face and dainty limbs, and proud, passionate ways. A touch of refined, high-bred grace shone out in every feature and gesture, such as could hardly have been expected from her desolate, untrained girlhood.

"Madeline, I asked for this last indulgence from you on this eve of my sacrifice to bespeak your pardon, and confess to you the whole truth. Will you listen to me, dearest, and soothe me by your pity, your soft touch, your thrilling caress, my darling?"

He drew the tiny hand he held in his to his hot cheek, and played with its soft touch, like a young lover who had just learned the truth of his lady's affection.

Madeline did not draw it away for a moment. Her eyes were closed, her lips compressed, and the still-disengaged hand almost clenched in the contest going on in her heart. Then she freed the imprisoned fingers with an arch and coquettish smile.

"Tell me what you have to say, if indeed there is anything new to disclose. But you forget that Philip Dacre, your confidant, related the whole story. I suppose you had concocted it well between you."

"Madeline, you are enough to drive a man frantic," said Aubrey, fiercely. "Dacre was of necessity taken into my confidence. He knew my terrible obligations, which endanger safety and freedom and my whole future life if I do not free myself from them ere long. If you doubt me, read this, Madeline, and tell me what remains for me except despair."

He handed to her a letter which he drew from his vest, and she, with affected carelessness, opened it, and perused the contents by that flickering and uncertain light.

They were but brief, and scarcely explained the prolonged and perplexed attention which the girl bestowed on them as she brushed the hair from her brow with her white hand, and gazed with troubled, wondering gaze on the graphically penned characters.

"It is strange," she murmured; "most strange."

"What astonishes my darling?" asked Aubrey, placing his hand once more on the paper she still held.

"Oh, nothing, nothing; only I fancied I had seen the writing before; but that is impossible, of course. It is your uncle's, is it not?"

"Yes," he returned, uneasily; "and it will satisfy you, dearest, of the hopelessness of my case. Steeped in debt, and with a relative whose heart is harder than that of a Jew, a prison staring me in the face, and ruin for my fair Madeline as well as myself inevitable. Dearest, what alternative had I save this hated marriage?"

She did not reply. Her head was averted, her ears turned to the door, which still remained ajar.

"Did you hear anything?" she whispered, softly.

He listened for a moment, then shook his head impatiently.

"You are fanciful, dearest; there was no ghost even of any sound. Madeline, answer me. Could I do otherwise?"

An ineffable look of scorn swept over her mobile face, but ere he had caught its expression no trace of the cold contempt remained.

"No," she said, "no; I do not think you could do anything else. Is that enough?"

"No, not quite. Madeline, say that you love me still, press your lips on mine, whisper your promise still to be mine, to cheer the dreary life before me, to cast your spells over the monotonous existence with an unloved wife."

Again Madeline started apprehensively.

"Aubrey, I am certain I heard a groan," she whispered.

"Some heavy sleeper's coarse snore," he said, impatiently. "You are frightfully nerveless, Madeline. But, if you wish to get rid of me, you have but to give the required promise and I will leave you. Yet it is shortening our brief bliss on the eve of such misery," he added, reproachfully.

"Shortening a pressing danger, you should say," she returned; "but let that pass. Take what you ask—my promise to pity and to cheer you when hampered with an unloved, inconvenient wife. Is not that it, Aubrey?"

Her manner somewhat perplexed him, but his facile nature ever seized the interpretation most agreeable to him, and he answered her with an assenting kiss.

"Then it is yours. Now go—I am terrified lest your visit here should be discovered. The consequences would be too frightful to us both."

This truth was too obvious to attempt its refutation, and he slowly and reluctantly rose to leave her.

"Good night, my diamond, my rare, precious ruby," he murmured in her ear.

He paused for a brief space, his eyes drinking in, as it were, every feature of her loveliness, then he glided from the room as noiselessly as he had entered.

Madeline's sharp senses heard the closing of the door behind him, and a deep, heaving sigh convulsed her breast.

"Mercy, mercy on me!" she gasped, tossing her arms wildly above her head. "What am I about to do? Have I cause for such a terrible revenge?"

She sprang to her feet in a restless agony. Then she placed herself in a sitting attitude on the fauteuil, her dark eyes fixed thoughtfully, her small foot tossing with a kind of unconscious pain.

"Yes," she murmured, "yes, it must be. This is the last weakness I will indulge. Do I love him yet—perjured, cowardly, and selfish as he is? Alas! woe is me! I do, I do worship that unworthy idol of my girlish heart; but it shall be hurled down, and with a crash that shall tear every remaining fibre from my soul, to which it clings like a stinging reptile. Yet, at what cost—what fearful cost to me and to her!"

And the girl closed her eyes in the very exhaustion of despair after such intense emotion.

Aubrey glanced cautiously around him after closing the door of that forbidden room.

Perhaps Madeline's alarm had made him somewhat apprehensive, for he lingered within the deepest shade of the recess ere he ventured to pass along the remaining portion of the corridor.

For a few seconds all was still, and he could distinguish no object of alarm in the vague obscurity that reigned around. But, as his eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness, he could scarcely repress an exclamation of terror, while a shudder ran through his blood.

There was a figure, white and slender, passing along the extremity of the passage, with the rapid noiselessness of a wandering ghost.

It paused before a distant door, and as it laid a hand on the handle the moonbeams shone out on the face it turned towards him—a white, spectral face, with eyes that were literally straining from their sockets. It was but for a second, yet that one glance well nigh froze Aubrey LeStrange's pulses like a glimpse of the Evil One himself.

He did not even attempt to stir for some moments. Then he crouched down within the recess, and in the shadow of its darkness he remained, as it were, numbed and still, though the brain was fevered with agonized thought and fear. Then came silence—deep silence—all save one low moan. At length Aubrey LeStrange stole from his hiding-place, and, ere the chimes had again sounded the third hour from midnight, he returned to his room. But there were three in that old mansion who never closed their eyes on the night that preceded Hilda Murgrave's bridal morn.

CHAPTER X.

Thus the seer with vision clear
Sees forms appear and disappear
In the perpetual round of change.

ROBINA FALCO had all the restless habits and the strange independence of slumber which mark

the more barbarous tribes of the East and the South, and it was no uncommon thing for her to leave her bed when the night repose of less active temperaments had scarcely begun.

The rustic hut which served her for a shelter in that wooded neighbourhood of Rose Mount possessed few luxuries to tempt the wanderer to any unusual indulgence in its rough structure and comfortless rooms, that barely withstood the inclemency of the weather. Still it did appear remarkable that the dark-haired daughter of a Southern clime should venture into the damp mist and the cheerless cold of that winter's morn, while yet the gray, faint light scarcely illumined the prospect sufficiently for her to discern her path through the thick dark trees of the extensive woods which skirted the domains of Mr. Murgrave.

Her keen eyes, however, appeared to defy the darkness, and to help her to keep one even and undeviating course along the main paths till she emerged into the more open road which led to the nearest village, now newly raised to the dignity of a town, thanks to the railway station that had selected it for its position.

She stopped for a few minutes, gazing earnestly at the distant towers of Rose Mount, then glanced around her as if expecting some one to encounter her in her lonely walk. But no one appeared, till she had resumed the firm step which belied her appearance of years, and she had taken at least fifty yards more towards the mansion, when the sound of steps, hurried and irregular, arrested her once more.

She stopped and gazed earnestly in the direction whence they came, and in a brief instant the figure of a man, with downcast head and irregular step that spoke of deep and gloomy thought, came sufficiently near for her to distinguish his features.

She paused for a moment in curious contemplation of the grave, well-defined features ere she went up to her fellow wanderer in the chill morn, and the new comer was too deeply engrossed in thought to perceive the sound of footsteps that were yet plain in the crisp autumn leaves and hardened earth.

Robina was close to him ere he was aware of her proximity.

"Good morning, Mr. de Vere," she said, with the air of an old acquaintance. "You are early astir this morning."

Rupert turned almost fiercely on her.

"I do not know you, good woman. I have no wish for impertinent comments from strangers," he said, coldly.

He continued his course, without vouchsafing farther words of courtesy to the singular stranger.

But Robina kept up with his rapid pace without any apparent difficulty.

"Excuse me, Mr. de Vere. It is never wise to repel a well-meant greeting. The time may be at hand when you will be very thankful for even one word of such 'impertinence,' as you call it. An exile from his home, a disowned son of an honourable race, and a discarded lover, may scarcely afford to scorn a well-wisher, however humble."

The hot blood had flamed up into the young man's face as the woman spoke these biting sarcasms, and he turned on her a look that might well have daunted one of the boldest sex.

Then the humiliating reflection that it was all but too terribly bitter truth, paled the crimson flush to an ashen hue.

"I am sufficient to myself. I need no help, I wish for no sympathy. I can bear my burden alone," he said, sternly. "There is always death as a remedy for every evil."

"Young man, do not talk so lightly of what ere any long interval has elapsed may chill your very blood," she returned, with a grave dignity ill according with her humble station. "Life and death are in other hands than our own, and woe to those who either trample on one or dare the other. Be warned in time. There is danger at hand for you, such as you dream not of. Crime is rife in your doomed race. Are your hands clean?"

He shuddered involuntarily at the low, impressive tone to which her voice had sunk, and the significance of her look.

"Are you a prophetess?" he said, striving to shake off the nervous terror. "Can you read the future?"

"If I were so minded, I could easily tell you of coming events that would well nigh stop your throbbing pulses," she replied, calmly. "But I have no wish to claim the hackneyed character of a fortune-teller. But I know enough of the past to read the future—ay and far more than you ever guess in your wildest imaginings."

"There is little to know of my uneventful life," he replied, unconsciously impressed by her grave manner to a lingering anxiety for farther elucidation.

"Do you know your father, young man? Do you remember your mother? save the portrait in the gallery at your doomed mansion; if so, you may know as much as I do, not otherwise."

"Then you—you were acquainted with her, and her husband?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"Her husband," repeated Robina, slowly.

"Was there such a person, Mr. de Vere?"

Then, as a flash of gloomy indignation lighted up his face, she softened her own hard manner.

"Rupert de Vere, do not cast from you the aid and the interest of the only being who can be of effectual service to you in the trials that surround you. I wish not to try you too severely, only to prove to you that I am advised of all—and far more than all—which has been told to you. One word, and I must leave you, though only for a time. Woman's love has been the fatality which has rested on you, even ere your birth, and has clouded your whole life. It will work yet deeper, blacker misery to you in your coming days, and inflict sharp suffering and shame such as will need all your faith and courage to bear. But mark you—if you are innocent of guilt, and keep trust in those who would give their whole life for your sake, you shall yet be saved as well as doomed by woman's love."

He laughed scornfully now.

"Then you are an emissary, I suppose, of others?"

"I know no one who dare dispose of my actions or rule my will," she answered, with the air of a queen; "but it is enough; you are warned, and when the emergency comes my words will recur to you with very different force from their effect now. Hasten your steps, young man, or you will be too late," she added, hanging back somewhat from her own course.

"How do you know my destination?" he asked, still hovering between anger and curiosity.

"You are flying," she said, "flying from a pressing calamity. Lose no time, for ere long your absence may be discovered."

Hastily turning from him, she went down one of the cross roads at which she had halted, and in a few minutes was lost to sight.

Rupert de Vere's own steps were quickened by the distant chime of the village church, which warned him of the truth of the stranger's suggestion.

The morning train was almost due, and he would scarcely be able to reach the station before it would come up; the time which had been occupied by the strange interview had so far upset his calculations that when he came within some quarter of a mile from the spot his watch informed him that his utmost speed could scarcely enable him to gain it at the necessary moment.

Had he been flying for his life no greater impetus could have been put on his speed than this seemed to afford. He ran on till his breath had gone, and his legs almost powerless from the prolonged race against time, and still he was some distance from the point to be reached. The only hope remaining was to take a short cut across an embankment not yet completed, with broken earth, and men's tools, and pieces of iron lying in confusion all around. Rupert knew the course well before the works had begun, and he did not hesitate to attempt it now.

Fearlessly he bounded over the obstacles, sprang down the steep height, and gained the opposite side, well high unconscious of the rough difficulties of the road.

His thought was too darkly engrossed, his mental pain too severe to take heed of physical suffering.

Flight from the scene of his misery was the one great idea that occupied his brain, and when he took his final spurt and gained his haven some two or three minutes yet remained before the arrival of the expected train.

"First class for London, sir?" asked the sleepy-looking clerk, who represented the station-master at that early hour.

"Yes—quick!" exclaimed the young man, impatiently thrusting his hand into his pocket and extracting from it a bank-note, which he threw on the desk.

But before the somewhat slow official could muster the arithmetic and the coins for change, the bell rang, and he rushed frantically to the platform in discharge of his wonted responsibilities.

Rupert hastily followed.

He cared little for the gold, so long as he could gain the means of flying from that hated spot.

The train whirled in. He seized the door of a carriage and sprang within its well-cushioned recess, never even seeing the tenants of the compartment, whose morning slumbers he rudely disturbed by his abrupt and stumbling entrance among legs, bags, and boxes.

The clerk returned to his office to complete the unfinished accounts, and took up the bank note in some perplexity as to the unreckoned balance.

As he did so he started back in terrified surprise.

"Bless me, what on earth is this?" he exclaimed, aloud. "Why, the note's all streaked with blood! And, dear me, I don't know who it was; only he went without his change like a prince, or a lunatic, never caring for the money that was due to him. It's the queerest thing that ever happened at Stretton station."

And he carefully placed the note by itself in a drawer.

CHAPTER XI.

The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride should leave her home;
The roads should mourn and be veiled in gloom,
So fair a corpse should leave its home.

"Has your lady's bell rung yet, Martin?" asked the old housekeeper at Rose Mount as the eight hours sounded on the old hall clock.

"Not yet, Mrs. Harper. Do you think I should waken her, poor, dear young lady?" returned the maid, with a slight shake of her head.

"Why not, foolish lass?" answered the mature dame. "What fancy have you taken in your foolish head that you should doubt about rousing sweet Miss Hilda on the happiest morning of her young life?"

"That's just the question, Mrs. Harper," rejoined the waiting woman of the heiress. "Whether for evil or for good, there's no doubt but it's an eventful day for my young lady, Mrs. Harper; and neither you nor I ever had any experience of it, you see."

This was a rather spiteful thrust at the worthy housekeeper, and if Miss Martin intended a sarcasm it was taken up with suitable dignity by the deputy mistress of the mansion.

"If you have half the chances I have had, my lass, I'll answer for it you won't let them slip," she replied, tartly. "But after thirty there's not so many to see after a young woman, unless it's for gold."

Hester Martin bridled her tall throat, but had the wisdom not to reply where such a passage at arms might bring dangerous results, and turned sharply round with some murmur about "cantankerous old maids" that, like distant thunder, possessed very little danger for its object.

It was now fast progressing between the hours of eight and nine o'clock, and Martin's respect for the repose which might be needful for the agitating scene awaiting her young lady was fast yielding to the urgency that an elaborate toilet and brief space conjured before her mind's eye.

"It's no use being driven in a corner and my young lady made a fright just for want of an extra half-hour," she grumbled.

And, seizing a can of hot water and some half-dozen fine towels, dainty enough for maiden's velvet skin, the Abigail proceeded to her duties.

She tapped at the door, gently, as in duty bound. No response spoke of the watchful gladness of a happy bride expectant. Again, and more sharply, the knuckles were applied to the fine oak panels. But in vain. All was silent, and Martin felt a vague alarm at such deep slumber, so unnatural to youth and love on such an occasion. She tried yet a third time, but with very slight delay, curiosity and terror overcoming all scruples.

Another instant and she had opened the door, and with an abrupt violence very much like the act of one who desires to warn any threatening ghosts of his advent.

The noise, however, was perfectly abortive in its results. The same awe-striking stillness reigned throughout the chamber, which—without being aware of the real cause—over gives an impression that no breath of life is being drawn within the atmosphere where such stillness reigns. Assuredly Martin was utterly unaware of such a theory. She had never been brought into contact with the grim King of Terrors, and could as soon have dreamed of connecting white hairs and wrinkles as his presence with her young and lovely mistress.

"Yet she paused and trembled ere she went farther into the room."

"Miss Hilda! Miss Hilda! it is nearly nine o'clock!"

No reply—no gesture answered the remonstrance. "Miss Murgrove, it will be too late if you do not wake up! Please rouse yourself—though I'm sorry to wake you—my dear young lady!"

The louder, shrill tones, which gradually ascended to the highest pitch of the gamut, were as useless as the more decorous softness of the first appeal had been.

Martin's surprise wound up its excited alarm to the pitch of desperation, and she approached the bed, round which the white curtains were closely drawn. She paused for a moment ere she disturbed them.

Her fingers shook and her lips whitened as she held the solution of the mystery still in her own hands, and a cowardly impulse to call for assistance ere she opened the veil that hid the truth was barely restrained by the idea of the anger and ridicule she would bring upon herself by the uproar it would create.

"What ridiculous nonsense!" she gasped, with a hollow laugh. "As if anything could happen to Miss Hilda!"

She took heart of grace, and drew back the curtains with a force that well nigh shook the whole bed by the sudden shock of the disturbed rings.

The light fell on the snowy sheets and the frilled pillows that supported the young head of its lovely tenant.

Martin bent over the couch like one paralyzed by a sudden catalepsy.

She stared wildly on the object before her, with cheeks and lips that to all appearance retained no trace of life's stream.

Then a long, shrill, agonized scream escaped her. She tried to leave the room where such horror reigned, but her limbs failed her; all grew misty before her eyes, and, ere she could reach the door, she sank rigid and senseless on the floor.

Another minute and the door again opened, and the intruder almost fell over Martin's prostrate form.

The new comer heeded not the Abigail's agitation as she pressed on to ascertain its cause.

But the tiny feet and light figure of Madeline Cleveland might have passed over a lily cup without breaking its stems, and the girl sprang forward, leaving the unconscious domestic unharmed on her lowly couch.

She stooped over the bed where Hilda Murgrove lay; she pressed her fingers on the wrists of the white arms that lay outside the bedclothes—she touched the white, cold brow with her lips, and shuddered at the contact. Then she gently turned back the coverlet, and, opening the embroidered night-dress, listened to the side where the heart should have beat.

When she raised her head once more her bloodless cheek was marked by a thin red streak, issuing from a slight embursement on its thin, white surface, and her hand was clenched—perhaps in pain—for she gazed with a sharp agony in her black eyes as she relaxed the clasp.

Her fingers twitched nervelessly as she thrust them into her pocket, then, drawing a handkerchief from its recess, walked like a somnambulist from the room till she reached Gertrude's chamber.

She opened its door with scarcely the warning of a tap. Its inmate stood there, in her gray bridesmaid's dress, with a mournful sadness and spiritual beauty in her expressive face that might have served for the original of the celebrated plate of "The Bridesmaid."

"Gertrude!" came on her ear, in a hoarse whisper, "can you control yourself?—a horrible thing has happened!—Hilda Murgrove has been—murdered!"

Gertrude did not scream—her misery was too deep for such a relief. Visions of unspeakable dangers, of—she scarcely knew what—complications of suffering rushed on her mind, and she scarcely appeared surprised at the stirring news.

"Are—you—sure?" were the first words that hissed from her parched lips.

"Come and see," was the low rejoinder.

Her hand beckoned like that of a spirit as she turned to go, and Gertrude mechanically obeyed its mute command. They glided on—those two girls—as if impelled by a magnetic power—swiftly, silently—without a pause or deviation—till they reached the chamber of death.

Then there was a momentary halt. Gertrude pressed her hand on her heart to still its loud beating, and to gather strength to repress the cries that rose to her lips in the overpowering terror of the moment.

"Come," whispered Madeline, reprovingly. "Moments pass on us; there is much to do!"

Gertrude obeyed, and shudderingly approached the bed, grasping its pillars for support, ere she dared to turn her eyes on the spectacle it contained.

Hilda lay there, in an attitude of utter abandonment, as it would seem, to her fate, her hands cast, with a wild despair, over the coverlet, and her head slightly on one side on the downy pillows.

A dark, blue-black ring was marked on her slender throat; her mouth was open, and a small stream of red blood stained the lips and rounded chin. Her eyes were closed, and circles, almost as deep in colour as that on the neck, were like caverns round their depths.

It was a spectacle that might well freeze the blood of the hardest, yet it was not the sole horror that weighed on the breasts of the motionless watchers.

"Who—did—it?" gasped Madeline, with a searching look that burned into Gertrude's very soul.

"Why do you ask me?" returned Gertrude, desperately. "I heard nothing—saw nothing. Heaven have mercy on us!—a frightful doom hangs over this unhappy house!"

"Notice must be given, we must alarm the household," resumed Madeline, with unnatural calmness. "Whom shall we tell first? Gertrude, will you go to Mr. Murgrove or Mr. Lestranger?"

"I cannot, I dare not; it is so dreadful!" shivered Gertrude; "they will be in frenzy!"

"Would you prefer Mr. de Vere?" asked Madeline, with a sharp, keen, inquiring look, which seemed to drive the blood yet farther back from Gertrude's athen skin.

"No, no, no; he loved her too well," gasped the girl, half audibly. "He could not bear it."
 "And you, coward, dare not save pain by giving it," returned Madeline, bitterly. "If you would not bring yet more calamities on this doomed house, go, and without delay. It were well to have none but discreet witnesses of the first burst of natural agony."

There was something in the significant look and tone that silenced any farther objections on Gertrude's part, and while Madeline stooped down to assist the half-conscious Martin to her feet she glided with automaton-like motion from the room.

"Girl, it is false! How dare you?" shouted Mr. Murgave, lifting his hand in sudden violence, as if he would have struck the messenger of evil news to the very earth. "It cannot be! No, no, my beautiful darling! my heart's core! she could not leave me! She had no single ailment! It is a hideous, miserable invention!"

"Uncle, dear uncle, my heart bleeds, I am well nigh mad, but not false. Would that I were. But—but the worst is not told. You say true—Hilda had no ailment. It is not from sickness she died!"

"Not from sickness? What would you say next?" he gasped, his features becoming livid with growing alarm. "Do you dare to hint that—that—"

"Uncle, it must be told, it must be known; our poor Hilda has had some enemy, and there are marks of violence that speak the cause of her death!"

Mr. Murgave gave a groan, a suppressed shriek, that rang in Gertrude's ears for many a day, and never could quite fade from her brain.

"Fiend, wretch, no torture shall suffice for this; my vengeance shall equal his crime!"

He rushed from the room like a whirlwind that must destroy everything that obstructs its path.

Madeline was kneeling by the bed as the wretched father entered, her head buried in the clothes, and her slight form writhing with agony, such as even the tragic spectacle might hardly be supposed to have produced in a comparative stranger.

"Mercy, mercy!" she whispered. "It was a fearful crime. Oh! what will be the punishment?"

"Death—torture worse than death," said a hoarse voice, and, looking up, she perceived Mr. Murgave standing near her. "The criminal cannot be far distant, and he shall be torn from the very bowels of the earth, were it possible that he could be concealed. My blessed child, my love, my Hilda. I dare not weep, save it were tears of blood, till you are avenged."

But even as he gazed wildly round, and his eyes fell on each object that could justly be supposed to lash grief to frenzy, the forced calmness vanished, and his groans sounded like the very roarings of a chafed tiger in their frantic distress.

The wedding robe, the veil, the jewels that were to have been worn by that lifeless girl—now the bride of death—were so many instruments of torture to the bereaved parent; and Madeline dared not come, as it were, between the wild beast and his prey by daring to remove them from his sight.

Then she said, in a low tone, drawing closer to his side:

"Shall I summon any one, sir? Shall not there be help to perform the necessary offices for your child?"

He glared fiercely on her for a moment, then the sense of her words seemed to dawn upon him, and he exclaimed:

"Yes, yes; you are right—quite right. Every one must be summoned, not one shall escape. Where is Rupert and Aubrey? Let them come and see this angel victim, then the gates shall be locked. Not even an animal shall be permitted to cross the threshold till the murderer is found."

He motioned to Madeline to leave the room as he spoke, then pointed to the bell.

"No, no; let them be summoned by servants. I will have no go-between. Harper and Reynolds are trusty; they shall secure all—all."

The girl was fain to obey. She went into the dressing-room and rang the bell with a shaking hand and sickened heart, almost realizing the full sense of the misery that might be at hand.

She scarcely heard the next brief exchange of sentences, the stern orders given, while yet their object was carefully concealed; she only felt that there was blood crying for vengeance, and its punishment hovering over the murderer of the innocent.

Then, after a pause, like a lull in a tropical tempest, Reynolds returned, with slow step and perplexed face:

"Please, sir, Mr. LeStrange is nearly dressed and will be with you directly, but Mr. De Vere is nowhere to be found. I don't think he can be in the house, sir; for I find one of the doors was unfastened, sir, before the under-footman went to open them, sir; and no one else has gone out that I can find."

A frightful gust of dark, revengeful passion convulsed Eldred Murgave's features as he drank in every word of the man's perplexed report. Then he

turned to Madeline with a cheerful smile more ghastly than the blackest frown.

"So one has fled. It is well. There is some ground to work on now. He—the hated one—who aspired to my fair heiress, has not remained to meet the stern vengeance of a father and a bridegroom. Ha, LeStrange, are you here?" he added as Aubrey entered the room. "You shall be a welcome partner in the task of bringing a murderer to punishment."

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

A WOODEN RAILWAY.—A wooden railway, on the 4ft. 8½ in. gauge, is being constructed from the town of Sorel, at the confluence of the Richelieu River with the St. Lawrence, through Drummondville to Athabaska, by Mr. L. A. Senechal, contractor. The *Montreal Herald* gives a long account of a recent inspection of the works. Upwards of two thousand men were at work, and the rails are laid on a large portion of the road. An experimental trip was made, the train going at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour, and running with remarkable smoothness. The ties, which are of hemlock and tamarac, are brought down on trucks from the woods through which the railway runs; they are put on a roll-way, run up to most ingenious circular saws, so gauged that at one operation they are mortised the proper depth and distance, not the difference of a hair's breadth being found between one and another. As fast as they are cut (and the operation is very fast indeed) the prepared ties are rolled over to a different siding from that on which they were received, an ordinary circular saw sides them, and they are loaded up to be run out to the place where they are wanted. The wedges for keying the rails are also prepared here. The rails are of maple, 4in. by 7in. and 14 feet long, the gauge of the line being 4ft. 8½ in. The cost of the line, including stations (nine in number), car and locomotive depot, engine and repairing shop, engine and tender, two passenger cars, eight grain cars, and twenty-five wood cars, is 5,000 dols. per mile in full for all but the Yamaska Bridge, which cost 35,000 dols.

THE PHYSICAL FEATURES OF INSANITY.

DR. T. B. TUCKER, a physician of eminence and learning in the science of mental disease, read a document at the recent meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, in which he said:

"It is generally acknowledged that the intellectual powers are manifested through the gray matter of the cerebrum, and as in insanity these faculties were impaired, exaggerated, or perverted, I believe that, by examining the brains of the insane, a hope exists of discovering a road for arriving at a solution of the functional difficulty."

"The time has passed when the term mental disease, insanity, or madness, conveyed, to the minds of physicians, the idea that the mind or its faculties were the entities which were the subject of disease. By a process of reasoning the pathologist has arrived at the conclusion that the abnormal physical manifestations are dependent upon primary or secondary changes in the nerve tissue; that insanity is a symptom of disease, not a disease itself, and that the cause of the disease must be looked for in the brain. Six years ago I commenced a systematic microscopic examination of the brains of the insane, and with this most important result, that in every single instance a marked departure from healthy structure was observed."

"I am not prepared to designate the individual part of the brain specially affected in the different forms of insanity; but I may say, generally, that the *corpora striata* are the portions most frequently found affected, and that the cerebellum is the organ least frequently subjected to disease. Further, that the white matter is much more liable to evident structural morbid change than the cortical substance in comparatively recent cases; and that where the intellect has been in abeyance for prolonged periods the structure of the gray matter of the cerebral convolutions is difficult of demonstration, the layers are found indistinct, as the cells are few in number and generally small in size. In the fifty-three cases of chronic insanity which I have examined I have found distinct structural changes in the brain of each."

FIRE SAFES.

THERE will be lessons to be learned from the Chicago fire concerning the value of safes and vaults, and the true principles of constructing them. The public at large has taken too little interest in this subject; but now that a hundred thousand people have suddenly lost everything except what these contrivances saved to them the question how and why so much was saved, and how much more might have been saved, becomes interesting to all men. We are as yet without details as to the fate of the

several kinds of safes employed there, as well as to the construction of those which did best, and of those which disappointed the hopes of their owners; but these are matters which must attract attention soon, and on which the public are entitled to be well informed.

It is known that the Custom House vault failed entirely to protect its contents. We do not know who built this vault for the Government, nor what officer accepted it. But the fact is a grave one, as showing the incompetency or dishonesty of some man in a high place of trust, and it ought to be investigated at once.

The occurrence of this fire, with the impossibility, in most cases, of saving even the most valuable papers, unless they were already deposited in a fireproof place, is likely to lead the people of other cities to prepare against such an emergency by a more extended use of safes. It becomes the makers of these to study the results of the Chicago fire with care, and to remedy the defects which it may have revealed in any of their work. In particular they must learn not to sell as "fireproof" any safe whatever which is too small really to protect its contents against a great heat, for it is certainly the small-sized safes which have chiefly failed, and it is of the first importance for them to remember that it is the enormous price of their goods which has hitherto prevented the more common use of them; and that, in order to serve the community to the utmost, and thereby to enrich themselves most effectually, their immediate and in view must be to sell the safes at the very lowest price consistent with good workmanship and security—that is to say, at a much lower price than at present. S. A.

THE CRUISE OF THE BRIGANTINE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHITHER wert thou bound in thy boat?" asked Hark Cringle of the officer who had charge of the boat sent by Pedro Polias from his dismantled sloop, and intercepted by the vessel of the former.

"To the main, Senor Capitano!" was the reply.

"For what purpose?"

"To get help to tow our dismantled sloop in where she could be refitted. And it were but courteous, it seems to me, Senor Capitano, to let me proceed, for, if our sloop be caught at sea in a gale, in her present condition, she'll surely founder."

"Then there would be a few new arrivals down below!" said the buccaneer, carelessly. "But thou hast told me but a part of the errand; give me the rest!"

"I have told thee all, Senor Capitano. I had no other orders!"

"Cur! thou hast. I see it in thy faltering lip—thy downcast eye! I'll test thee with the thumb-screws, and see if torture will make thee more truthful. If I fail in that, I'll try others of thy crew, and for every falsehood thou hast uttered I'll have a limb torn from thy quivering carcass!"

"Mercy, Senor Capitano!" cried the man, terror-stricken at the fierce gleam in the blue eyes now looking him through and through. "I will confess all. There are two sloops but half a league from our old anchorage, manned by friends of my commander, Don Pedro Polias. I was ordered to go to them, and pilot them out to our vessel, where, taking our crew on board, they, under Pedro Polias, could resume the attack on the Englishmen in Magnolia Key."

"Now I believe thee, and, lest they become aware of thy master's mishap, I shall detain thee and thy boat's crew until to-morrow, but no harm shall befall thee."

"Why should we be kept in irons, Senor Capitano?" asked the officer. "I pledge thee my honour as a man that neither I nor my crew will attempt to leave until thou dost bid us go. In truth we all would joy to change masters, for it is no pleasure to serve one who may be smooth as a lagoon one hour and rougher than the Gulf in a nor'-easter the next."

"Well, we'll think of that anon. As to the irons, they shall be taken off. Ho, Victor!"

"Here, my kind master, here!"

"Bid Gaspar set the prisoners all free from irons, but say they are to be held safe until I decide whether they may ship with us or not."

The page bowed and retired with the Lieutenant of Pedro Polias that the order might at once be carried out.

Gaspar soon entered the cabin alone.

"Their boat with ours is in tow," said he, "and the prisoners are on deck or in the forward cabin, mingling peaceably with our men."

"It is well, Gaspar. The bulk still drifts seaward?"

"Not now, for the tide is near its turn, I think, but she is three leagues out at least."

"Good; she will not drift in ere dark, and by that time we shall have work to do. Until then I shall cruise lazily to leeward of the island, or, dropping killock, set the men fishing on the reefs inside, as if we had no hostile intentions. Then, when darkness falls on earth and sky, I will slip the moorings, and, without hoist of sail, with muffled sweeps, tow the sloop silently to the lee shore of the island, scale the heights quietly, and, falling on the rear of the English, take them by surprise. Most likely we shall succeed, and lose not half a dozen men, for they will expect attack in front, not in rear."

"The plan is wise, brave capitano. It must succeed."

"Ay, I think so. But keep it entirely to thyself. Not even Victor must know of it, for the lad wields a strange influence over me—one I cannot account for. He is too merciful for our profit."

"Ay, but in a lad like him 'tis natural. The young, thou knowest, are better far than we who are hard-rubbed by Time's relentless hand."

"By my beard, Gaspar, thou hast caught infection from the boy! Thou, too, art preaching. Go now; I would take the draught the surgeon brought but a breath ago, and rest. I wish to lead my men to-night. Keep the prisoners pleased with quiet games and plenty to eat and drink. I'll set them free when this is over, without they yearn to stay with us."

Gaspar bowed obedience, and, turning, left Hark Cringle to his medicine and rest. But just as the latter drank his potion Gaspar returned.

"I came to tell thee, captain, that on the northern board the three sloops of the Tortuga Frenchman, Pierre Laselle, are creeping slowly down; while to the east three other craft are sneaking out from their lagoons."

"There is but little wind?"

"Not enough now to fill a sail where they are."

"Then when the flood sets they'll not be able, even with sweeps, to stem the tide."

"No, most likely not."

"They cannot, in any way, without a freshened breeze, get here before night comes on?"

"No, sir."

"Then do not feel anxious because they are in sight. Do as I first bade thee, and thus while time away. I will lie down and sleep. Wake me when the first dog-watch is called, for then it will be time to act."

CHAPTER XIX.

For a time Lord Radcliffe kept his men, or a portion of them, posted on the hills above his batteries, thinking, from appearances, that the One-armed Buccaneer intended to land and attack him in the rear; but when he saw his vessel come to, with a keel, a half-mile from the shore, lower away all sail, and the men go leisurely to fishing on the rocky reef beneath their keel, he made up his mind that they would wait for reinforcements. Then he watched closely the yet distant sloops, and saw with increased satisfaction that they were becalmed.

Speaking to Starbuck, who was with him reconnoitring, he said:

"Night will be upon us, surely, before they can any of them get here, and even then there must be more wind to bring them up."

"The crews of these sloops all use long sweeps, my lord—great oars, manned each by a dozen men!"

"Ay, but those against the tide, which now will err, or hath turned now, methinks, will hardly bring them up!"

"Not till late, at any rate, my lord!"

"Then go, good Starbuck, and give all your energy to hastening repairs. Then when the leaks are fairly stopped hasten to get our stores on board, keeping the guns and ammunition in battery to the very last. By working hard we'll get to sea this night, mayhap before they try to attack us again. Afloat, with a working breeze, I'd defy them all. It were better to sink there, at any rate, defiant British seamen, than to be butchered here on shore like cattle in a pen!"

"Most true, my lord; I'll do my best to get the brigantine ready to go out. But there comes a messenger from Sedley! Shall I wait to hear his report?"

"No; hasten on the work. I'll see in person to anything which Sedley wants. We shall not be attacked by these men out here before they are reinforced. We've made them respect us through their losses!"

Starbuck now hastened to his work, and Lord Radcliffe turned to meet the messenger.

"Good news, my lord!" said the man. "Lieutenant Sedley bade me tell you that Lady Mary despatched in the square-rigged vessel out at sea a man-of-war, and that she now with square-yards heads in towards the island."

"This good news indeed; if true, I'll double your pay, my man, for bringing it. Heaven appears in-

deed to favour us. When wreck seemed our sure doom, a harbour loomed before us; when a crowd of hungering fiends came rushing on to banquet on our death, the tide held them back under fire until disabled—cut to pieces, they drifted from our range. Now, when peril is thickening in the distance, help also looms up as near. Heaven is indeed all-merciful, and weak are those who feel it not. Haste back to Lieutenant Sedley and to Lady Mary, and say I will soon be there. I linger here to give a few orders to my sentinels, then I will to them, and for myself see what this stranger is, and, if a man-of-war, strive to learn her nation. We will by signals draw her to our aid, and, with her guns and our own, when once more we are afloat, rid the world of the plundering wretches who swarm about these isles and inlets. In ten minutes I'll be at the battery say to Mr. Sedley; in five more with my sister, where she keeps watch."

The messenger saluted and hurried back, while Lord Radcliffe, sending every man but a single sentinel down to help Mr. Starbuck in the labour gangs, gave that sentinel directions to watch all the vessels, and especially the sloop so near, and to make instant report of any new or near-approaching danger.

This done, Lord Radcliffe hurried to the points where he would meet Sedley and his sister.

"A man-of-war you say, in the square-rigged craft in the offing?" he said as he approached the young officer.

"Ay, so saith Lady Mary, and your lordship knows that she is well acquainted with the appearance of various craft. In truth she knows as well the difference of rig in sailing vessels as any man in all our crew."

"Yes, thanks to your frequent teaching, Mr. Sedley. As there is now no immediate danger of attack from any quarter, you can go up with me to her point of look-out, and together we will examine the stranger and I consult how we can best signal her for aid. Starbuck hopes to have the brigantine all ready for us to board ere the mid-watch of night comes on, then, if this be a man-of-war, the swarming thieves around us shall receive a lesson which will never be forgotten, if indeed one of them should live to hold memory of what became of his comrades!"

The young officer left his gun in charge of a trusty subordinate, and at once accompanied Lord Radcliffe up the hill.

"So, fair sister mine, you have found a treasure on the sea, a man-of-war to champion us when we so sorely need her services."

"It is a man-of-war, and English too, good brother!" said the lady. "I know that by the bluff bows and square yards, and sails with scarcely any roach, for her flag is astern, and cannot yet be seen! A Frenchman would be sharper forward, with short yards and more roach to the topmasts. A Dutchman would lie flat in the water, with not half the canvas we see yonder!"

"True, my fair sister. You are as well witted in sea-signs as the best of us. The vessel comes in very slowly it seems to me."

"With scarcely a breath of wind, and the tide out there not yet turned, we could not expect otherwise. She heads a little to windward of the dismantled hull of the sloop which Mr. Sedley beat so bravely off this morning."

"Yes, and I hope will sink her ere she comes hither. But we must have a flag up here, Union down, and signal to the stranger the need we have of help."

"I will order it, my lord," said Sedley.

"Nay—I have to go down and see how Starbuck's work is going forward. I will send it. Stay here, Lieutenant Sedley, with Lady Mary, and watch the frigate, for such I see she is. I think the watch will be better kept if both be here, instead of one below, the other here."

The young nobleman went off laughing when he said this, and both Sedley and the lady coloured up with blushes, well knowing what he meant.

"Your brother frowned darkly yestern morn, sweet Lady Mary, when, giving way to your dear heart's impulse, you did embrace me. Yet now he seems to wish to leave us where we can hold converse, which he must know is likely to tend towards expression of the love which fills both our hearts."

"Yes, my brave Algernon, and I know a reason for it. I had serious converse with him last night. He would have disparaged thee, as a suitor for my love, but I silenced his batteries!"

"How, sweet lady?—is it a secret?"

"Not from you, Algernon. He knows, as well as I, that, though not favoured by fortune's gifts, you are nobly born, and that of the three families most famous in the Marches, the Harkness, Radcliffe, and the Sedley—yours, though poorest, is most ancient. Ours now alone holds title, because the last male Harkness who held it is gone, and my brother, next

of kin, held the right to take it. Of fortune in mine own right I have enough, bright heaven knows, for you and me. Of love I'm sure we both hold precious store in hearts which never loved before!"

"True, dear lady, true, but I am one who would carry wealth to my lady rather than she should come to me with dowry."

"You will bring honour, a brave, protecting hand, a blameless name, and a form and face no king in all the world can equal!" said the lady, earnestly. "But look—Algernon—look—the frigate bears away!"

"Ay, she steers towards the pirate whom I dismantled. Her look-out hath discovered him."

"Yes, she steers right for the wreck. She will learn most likely who dismantled her, then come bowling down before the wind to help us out of trouble."

"Here comes the flag, with a staff to hoist it on. We'll have that up, then to our watch again."

The man who brought the flag and a spare studding-sail boom for a staff lashed the latter to a stunted tree securely, then with the outhaul in the block as halliards, ran the flag aloft, its Union down.

But so calm now was the air that the flag lay limp against the pole, and not a fold was lifted to catch the stranger's eye. Yet out where she was there was a gentle breeze to give her steerage way.

"What doth it mean? The frigate hath suddenly changed her course!" cried Lady Mary. "She hauls up and leaves the dismantled pirate far on her lee beam."

Sedley quickly took the glass and carefully sighted the wreck.

"There is not a man to be seen upon her deck," he said. "The cunning wretches have hidden all below, and the commander of the frigate does not deem the wreck worth looking at. He hauls up now to chase those sloops so far to windward. He lifts at least five points to windward of this island."

"And will pass us, unlooked-to, uncare-for?"

"Not if our signal is seen, as it must be, for I feel a gentle breath of wind now. See, it lifts a curl of sunny light from off your fair neck, sweet lady."

"It lifts what is of more importance—our flag!" said the lady. "The frigate, too, comes in more rapidly."

"None too much so, for night is drawing on," said Sedley. "She has no eyes but for the sloops away off to the west it seems. Why does not her look-out turn his eyes this way?"

"Had you not better fire a gun?" said Lady Mary.

"Her captain would not thank me for it, since it would alarm the pirates with whom he wants to close. No, better let him in his own way engage them. 'Twill prevent any attack on us, and we can the easier hasten our own preparations for sea."

"You know best, Algernon."

"Thanks, dear lady. Now do me a favour, I pray."

"I will if it be in my power."

"Go to the tent where your sisters wait, and take refreshment. There is no longer need of your watching here. This faithful man will stand sentinel. Come—I will escort you as far on the way as my battery, where my own servant has prepared a lunch for me."

"You are chary of your hospitality," said the lady, pouting. "May not I share your evening meal?"

"Ay, lady, if you will, such as it is. But I thought you would like—"

"Nothing better than your company and your fare. So say no more. I will not be driven from your convey."

"Would that you might be under it for ever, dear lady," he sighed as he led the way down the hill.

CHAPTER XX.

THE twilight came, then deepened into darkness ere Hark Cringle, who had been on deck for an hour, gave the order to slip moorings and to sweep his sloop in towards the shore.

He would not have given it even then so soon, but two things alarmed him. Two of the Spanish sloops had stood out to sea, and he feared they would fall in with Pedro Polias and enable him to attack the English first. Next, there was heavy firing in the north-west, so quick and regular that he knew the French sloops were engaged with a disciplined enemy—undoubtedly a man-of-war.

This being the case, he knew that whatever he intended to do must be done quickly.

While the vessel was moving in with her great oars muffled so that no sound but the quick drip of falling water when they were lifted reached the ear the buccaneer went into his cabin to arm.

Victor was there to serve him—sad and tearful.

"Lad, why is it that thou, who didst not shrink when destruction was all round thee on the deck, whence thou didst tear me from the clutch of death, now show alarm at the prospect of a battle which I hope will be almost bloodless?"

"Alas, kind master—my heart is full of bodings.

I fear this battle will be thy last. Would that I could turn thee from thy purpose."

"That thou canst not do, my boy. It were sheer cowardice to yield into the hands of others what is now so near my own. For Pedro Polias hath ere this, I fear, joined hands with those who'll help him."

"Yes, that may be so, but, oh! should success be thine, and yet death come with it. Death unto thee!"

"Why, it would be only death, my boy. Have I not faced it a thousand times, toyed with it as my barque has played with the tempest and mocked its strength? 'Tis weak in thee, child though thou art, to fear that which must in good time come to us all!"

"I know it, good master, but I had dreamed a bright fate was in store for thee. I thought in a dream I saw thee master of a lordly castle, with fair lands thine own as far as eye could see—and a bride who loved thee well!"

"Tush, boy—'twas indeed a dream. Once such might have been my lot, but 'twas not to be. Get me my steel vest, 'tis linked mail, lad, and light. I will wear it, though I had not so intended, to take what care I may of the life thou thinkest has some value. 'Tis in yonder armoury. Ah! what is the matter, child? That cry—hast thou hurt thyself?"

The lad had opened the armoury door, where hung several suits of clothing, the vest of mail, and the various weapons. But not on these did his eyes fall, nor did these cause his cheek to blanch, then flush with sudden redness, while a low cry broke from his lips.

There, above all, framed in black walnut, richly carved, was a small but exquisite portrait in oil, the face of a lovely woman, to whom, despite the different complexion, one fair, the other brown, and the hair of one so long and flowing, the other in a short, wavy mass, there was resemblance to Victor himself.

"What a strange face—it startled me!" said the boy.

"Strange, quoth ye? Is it not beautiful?" cried Mark Cringle, almost fiercely. "Ay, it is—yet false as fair, and for that to me it was a delusion and a snare. Take down the vest and close the door, boy—I do not want to look upon it now. I need all my strength to-night!"

The boy, trembling under some strong emotion, took down the vest, which his master did not put on, but, seeming to be wrapt in thought, he laid it on an ottoman, took up his cap and left the cabin.

"For these long, long years, through all his perils, he hath kept that!" said the boy, clasping his hands over his heart. "These long, wild years, when striving amid the storm and in the mad heat of battle to forget, he hath yet clung to that. False and fair, fair and false; oh! Heaven, too true, too true! He will not forget! Ah! he comes! Back, betraying tears, back, and let me be myself again!"

The buccaner came in, but seemed too much absorbed in thought to even see the boy. He merely took his sword and belted it upon his thigh, then as the sloop's prow jarred against the beach he went out to head his men.

Quickly the boy put on a belt which carried a dagger and pistols and followed.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Captain Sarsfield heard the rapid, heavy firing of cannon to his south-west, he asked Lieutenant Grummet what he thought it came from.

"The pirates wouldn't be so foolish as to fight each other, sir; so it must be some armed vessel they've fallen in with that makes a desperate resistance, or else a man-o'-war is playing such a game as we've commenced, but can't carry through!"

"Why can we not carry it through?"

"Because we are already shoaling our water, and those two sloops are in where we can't go without grounding. You see, sir, they're well in with the island now, and they'll make hiding-places in spite of us!"

"Well, we can send in boats and cut them out or destroy them!"

"We can send in boats, sir, but whether they'll come out again is doubtful. I know what kind of work it is. They are familiar with every bend and turn; they always keep out of the way as long as they want to, and, when they get you stuck, pepper you as a widow does a bachelor, till you have to retreat or get used up!"

"Then you'd give up this chase were you in command?"

"I surely would, sir; for we'll get nothing more than hard knocks at the best!"

"Well, you can brace up, and we'll put about and head to sea!"

"Would it not be best, sir, to run down and see what that firing amounts to? There's a desperate fight

going on, and we might take a hand in there and do good service!"

"Again you are right, Mr. Grummet, and I thank you for your advice. Bring the ship round and steer her to the point you think best!"

"Thank you, sir! Quartermaster, send Jim Kelso here!"

This man, the same who was aloft when Captain Sarsfield was there with his glass, came aft to the first-lieutenant on receiving orders.

"You're well acquainted with these waters, Kelso, I've heard you say," said the officer.

"Yes, sir; I ought to be. I was cast away on the southern point of the Isle of Pines, when I sailed in a Salem trader. Me and another chap got an old canoe, and cruised about for over six months, dodging pirates and hidin' away from 'em, livin' on fish and racoon oysters, that clump in bunches about the mangrove roots. What I don't know about these 'ere waters, sir, isn't worth the knowin', if it is me as says so!"

"Whither away is that firing, do you think?"

"Why, it's plain enough, sir, down at Magnolia Key. I saw there were people there when we were a-bearin' down for the wreck, but I was told to keep my eye on these 'ere sloops to windward and forgot all about 'em."

"People there? A vessel may have been cast away during the last gale, and it may be her people resisting a piratical attack!" cried Captain Sarsfield. "Fill away at once, Mr. Grummet, and run down under the pilotage of this man, but keep the lead going on both sides of the ship, and all hands at their stations, for we must keep aloft!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The frigate was now worn round, her braces rounded in, and, as she squared away, Jim Kelso went forward with a night-glass to make out the land, if possible, by its aid, though he had given the compass bearing of the Key pretty accurately.

As the wind was now freshening he remarked to Mr. Grummet that before moon-rise they would be abreast of as snug a harbour as there was on the south side of Cuba, right in the heart of the Magnolia Key he had been talking about.

"Deep enough for us?" asked the lieutenant.

"Deep enough and large enough to moor a dozen line o' battle ships, sir! Wood and water in there, too. Seven fathoms over the bar, sir, I sounded it a dozen times, and when we got off, me and my mate, 'twas in a Spanish sloop-o'-war, that run in for wood and water."

The lieutenant asked no more questions, but looked to his sails, for the breeze was still freshening, and the frigate dashed along jauntily with it on her beam.

The firing was yet heard, but it did not seem so rapid as at first.

Suddenly there was a glare of light seen away to the south-west.

"Not moon-rise yet, surely!" cried Captain Sarsfield as his eye caught sight of it.

"No, sir—not for an hour yet. It is a fire on the island that Kelso talks about."

"A vessel on fire, sir, I reckon, by the way that the flame runs up. Nothing except sails or tarred rope would burn as quick as that."

"Heavens! Crowd on sail. I feel as if we were needed there, and may arrive too late. Crowd on every stitch of canvas that will draw."

"We have got every sail set now, sir, that will do any good. We are making nine knots through the water, and that is great for us!"

(To be continued.)

THE KING OF THE TRAPPERS.

CHAPTER III.

Now, quiet soul, depart when Heaven please.

I Henry VI.

CONCEALED by the thick bushes into which she had fallen, the poor girl lay for a long time, knowing nothing of what was passing around her; but when sensibility again returned the full terrors of her situation instantly forced themselves upon her bewildered brain, and she trembled at her future.

With the caution she had learned of Old Moscow during their brief and rapid journey, she slowly arose, looked round, and listened. There was nothing to be seen or heard, and, emboldened by the silence, she stole from her concealment in the bushes, and crept slowly towards the brow of the cliff.

It was desolate as if man had never been there—was torn and trampled and crumbled away; the roots of the tree to which the white man had hung were broken, and everything told of the fearful end of the murdered and murderer.

Still there might have been some strangely accidental escape; and, to satisfy herself as much as it was possible for her to do, she lay down and drew

herself carefully to the edge, and endeavoured to penetrate the gloomy depths.

Then the mists gathered still more thickly in her eyes, and her brain whirled. She could see dark objects lying at the bottom, and hundreds of foul birds of prey wheeling round, settling upon and fighting for a portion of the horrid feast.

That the roots of the tree had broken with the double weight; that one had dragged the other down, to be impaled upon the cruel rocks, and be crushed out of all semblance of humanity, she was certain.

Filled with thoughts that changed even if they did not do away with her sorrowful ones the wretched girl now hastened to a spot from which she could command a view of the country for miles around, and looked anxiously for the hills Old Moscow had pointed out. But there were high points of land on every side—some that appeared quite near, others at a distance, and she could not decide which were the friendly ones.

To her untrained eyes there was nothing to distinguish the one from the other, but she at length settled the matter to her satisfaction, and began to journey in the direction she had chosen—in a directly opposite course, however, to that she believed she was going. In fact, though she was not then aware of it, she was lost.

But with rapid feet she hastened along the rugged way—frightened at every bush—seeing an Indian's form in every stump, and an Indian face in every thicket—startled by every stirring of a leaf, every cracking of a branch—by every call of a bird and plash of musk-rat into the water—until she began to grow faint with hunger and weary from unwonted exertion.

Reflection only added to her torture. She had no knowledge of woodcraft—knew nothing of the ways in which a hunter or even squaw would soon have procured plenty, and scarcely dared to put leaf or bark into her mouth for fear it might be poison. In such a state of affairs bodily rest afforded but little real relief, and soon she started again and kept wandering until night came once more, when she sank to the earth, and there remained till morning dawned.

Then the fact that she was lost burst upon her with appalling force, and she bowed her head and wept long and bitterly. But the idea of dying there alone gave her strength, and she began again her hopeless journey.

Noon came, and the hot sun parched still more her lips, and appeared to make her blood boil in the veins—night and the heavy dew and cold wind chilled her form, until her bones seemed ice.

All her desperate struggles to gain home were ended now.

She could go no farther. She had finished the last foot of her earthly journey unless assistance came, and that speedily. She reeled and fell. Her eyes grew dim and her brain clouded. Strange thoughts floated through it, until her intense longings were condensed into and found utterance in the single word:

"Water!"

For a brief season tired nature gave way, and she slept, though only to dream such terrible dreams as caused her to start up suddenly. And again and again this was repeated, until even as the mad desire for drink became too terrible to endure the sense of blessed gratification stole over her swimming brain—cool, sparkling water was held to her lips, and she drank such a draught as no one save the shipwrecked sailor or one in the same situation as herself ever dreamed of. She drank, opened her eyes, saw who had given the water to her, and sank back again into the arms that were holding her.

The young man at her side was of fair face and strong form, and his look of anxiety showed how very deeply his feelings were interested—showed what it would have crimsoned his face to speak—the true state of his heart. His dress, and the arms he carried, revealed the trapper, and his knowledge of the woods that he was no novice.

"Heaven be thanked," he murmured, from lips almost as colourless as those of the girl whose head he pillowed tenderly against his swiftly beating heart, "that my steps were guided to this spot where her precious form was lying, and that she is not dead. But if she should die?"

Crushed by the thought, he laid her gently down, brought more water, and bathed her ashy face—held the improvised cup of bark to her trembling lips, and silently prayed, as he had never done before, for her restoration.

At length his efforts were crowned with success. The blue eyes opened, the form was gently raised—rich blushes mantled the soft cheeks as she saw how closely she was held, and the change from utter despair and almost death to safety and the promise of life acted like a charm.

"Philip, Philip Lee!" she exclaimed, though in the softest of whispered words. "Heaven must

have guided you. But had you been an hour later you would only have found my—my corpse!"

"Yes, it must have been Heaven—or, as Old Moscow would say, your good angel. But where is he? How did you come here?"

"Old Moscow," she answered, pointing reverently upward, "is with the angels."

"Dead?"

"Give me some food—let me gain a little strength and I will tell you the sad story. I am dying of hunger; for over two days not a single morsel has passed my lips."

"Merciful Heaven! You starving to death, and Old Moscow already dead!" and the iron frame of the young man shook like one in convulsions.

But he hastened to produce his little store of dried venison and parched corn—brought a fresh supply of water, murmuring the while against the coarseness of the fare, and that if she could but wait he would procure something better fitted for her delicate nature.

As well might he have asked the starving wolf or winter-famished bear to wait; as it was he had to use gentle force to keep her from bringing death by the very food she had so much longed for. He knew the danger of over-eating after so long a fast, and when the keen edge of the appetite was somewhat blunted he refused to give her more, and asked again for the particulars of the death of his old friend.

"He died for me," was the tearful answer; and she solemnly repeated the story.

"But the savage Indian died with him!" answered the young trapper, his face lighting up with enthusiasm, though it instantly afterwards darkened with revenge.

"Yes, they must have had one fate, and so horrible that it makes my blood run cold even to think of it."

"There'll be more Indians die!" was the vindictive response. "He was the truest and best man that ever followed a trail; and though I know if any man was ever taken home to glory he was, yet his old bones wouldn't rest in peace if he were not revenged. But there's time enough for that. Now I must get you out in the woods, and back to—"

"My dear father and mother. Oh, tell me of them!"

"It'll be a blessed day when they have you back in their arms, for they are mourning sadly, and the last words your poor mother said when I came away were that she'd never see her Maggie again."

The girl looked at him with thankful eyes, even though they were still swimming in tears—with eyes that betrayed warmer feelings than she would have permitted her tongue to utter. She had been attracted towards him when they first met, as he had been to her; and amid such scenes love is a plant that quickly blossoms. She looked upon him, too, as having saved her life; and when he spoke of returning to search for Old Moscow's body the colour left her cheeks, and he felt her weight grow more heavy upon his arm as they walked slowly along.

Both were drinking in deep and delicious draughts of that feeling which is the nearest to Heaven—both thinking of the time when danger would be passed, and they could pour out the wealth of their hearts into each other's willing ears.

Conversing with each other, they almost forgot their still perilous situation, until the whistling of a bullet put a sudden ending to their ideal dreams of happiness, and the young trapper fell backward with a heavy groan—the girl screaming and clinging to him.

But in an instant she was torn away and hurled to a distance; the half-risen trapper knocked senseless by the blow of a tomahawk, and bound hand and foot.

Then she was rudely lifted from the place where she had fallen, and saw to her dismay that she was again in the power of the chief who had at first abducted her; he whom Old Moscow had told her was the most cruel and brutal of all his tribes—To-ho-pe-ka or Horse Shoe—the war-chief of the Sioux.

But no time was given for thought. Lifting the senseless body of her lover in his arms, the Indian drove her before him with his hatchet until he reached his horse, threw his burden upon it, and guided her back to a captivity that was worse than death!

CHAPTER IV.

All is not lost: the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield. Milton.

From the moment of his fall Old Moscow gave up every hope of escape, for though he had been in many a desperate situation none had ever rivalled this.

Suspended between heaven and earth, deprived of the use of his hands, with the heavy weight of the Indian hanging about his neck like the nether mill-

stone, and producing strangulation, it would have been madness to think of escape.

He tried to pray, but nothing could escape his lips. Even had he been hanging there alone his situation would have been bad enough, with the blood all rushing into his head; and death would soon have followed—now it must be almost instantaneous.

But he was mercifully deprived of feeling even before he had time to fully comprehend all the terrors with which he was compassed—hang as a dead man until the hands of the Indian released their clasp, and the body plunged down to a living death.

Yet even when the compressing power about his throat had gone the old trapper knew nothing until the almost expired life surged up again within him and he found himself lying under a tree with a body of Indians drenching him with water.

Never had a man been so literally rescued from the jaws of death, and never had one more curiosity to know how it had been accomplished; but for the time he was dumb.

It was hours before his bruised throat and swollen lips and tongue would answer the will sufficiently to articulate, and by that time he had been brought back to the very prison wigwam from which he had mysteriously escaped. As soon, however, as he could articulate he began to question his guards.

The story was short but plausible. The conflict had been witnessed by several of their number who were following upon the trail—they had been near when he had fallen, and hastened to the rescue, and though too late to save the one of their own blood had succeeded in doing so by him and taken the most ready means to restore him to sensibility.

"It's mighty hard," he almost grumbled, "to bring a dead man back to life just for the sake of killing him again. But if it is Heaven's will I'm content."

"The pale-face fears death," was the sneering reply.

"No more than any other man, but he's an idiot who doesn't, for the best of us ain't any too good, and I know I have my full share of sins to answer for. But if you mean I fear the pain of dying it isn't so."

"The torture of fire will make him sing another song."

"I know that the flesh is weak and that I am no stronger than any other man, but if you think that Old Moscow will—"

"Old Moscow!" was repeated by a hundred tongues, with the utmost astonishment, for his fame had reached even their ears, and their joy knew no bounds at having such a man for a captive.

"Yes, that is my name—that is the one I am best known by, and I suppose it's just as good as any other. Anyhow I am not going to deny it."

Yet for all his bold avowal he would not have done so if he had reflected for a moment, for it would make them take extra precautions against the possibility of escape and render his death more horrible.

"Old Moscow!" was repeated again and again, and even the squaws and boys crowded forward to see one so famous.

On the evening of the third day of his captivity a stir in the village told of some unexpected and gratifying event, and, placing his eyes to a chink in the bark covering of the wigwam, he saw that which caused a greater chill of horror to pass through his frame than the knowledge of his own certain and terrible fate had done.

Riding in triumph into the village came the great chief. Dragging behind him by ropes placed round their necks and fastened to the saddle, were two prisoners, with tied hands, and the first glance showed him that they were the beautiful girl for whom he had risked his life, and his favourite companion, the young trapper, Philip Lee.

Then the blood of the old man fairly boiled, and his feelings found vent in the strongest words of indignation and scorn, though uttered under his breath.

"The mean, sneaking dogs!" he said, "to drag a woman by the neck; and the poor boy too. If ever there was a tribe that deserved to be sent wholesale to perdition, it is the Sioux—the miserable cut-throats. But I do hope the boy won't make any sign to let them know that he knows me. If I can only make them think that we are strangers, and get them to put him in the same wigwam, then—" But, seeing that one of the braves was drawing near, he continued aloud: "Whom are they dragging along like a dog?"

"Do you not know him?" was the quick question.

"Me know a fellow that has not more pluck than that? Before I'd suffer such disgrace I'd just drop down and be strangled to death. Me know him? I hope they won't disgrace me by putting such a coward in the same wigwam."

But such appeared to be the determination, for the moment Lee was released from his not only disgrace-

ful but dangerous position he was led thither, notwithstanding the protestations of Old Moscow, and rudely thrown down and bound.

This appeared to have been the orders of the chief who had made both him and the girl prisoners, as it would require double the number of guards to watch them if separated.

It was well that the young trapper was quick-witted, and understood that they were to appear as strangers, for there were a dozen pair of sharp eyes fixed upon them, and the least change of expression would have been fatal to the plans of Old Moscow. Still he did not hesitate to talk, and after rating his companion soundly upon the ignominious manner in which he had been brought into the village he questioned him as to how, when, and where he was captured, and learned all he wished to know.

"Well," he said, "you have to die, and all the advice I can give you is not to disgrace your white blood, but die like a man. But don't talk any more. I hate cowardly boys!"

The rest of the day was passed apparently in the most sullen silence, yet they managed to converse at intervals, and Old Moscow thoroughly posted his friend.

But when night came—and fortunately it was one of extreme storm and darkness—they managed to get their heads near together, and whispered without restraint.

Then the plan that Old Moscow had formed at the first sight of Lee was matured and acted upon.

Though tied hand and foot, the deer-skin thongs were not proof against the sharp teeth of a determined man, and in a much shorter time than would have been deemed possible the old trapper had the full use of his hands, and had given freedom also to his companion.

To have put themselves out of the way of danger was then an easy task, and they would have laughed at being overtaken, had it not been for the captive girl. Now they would either save her or lose their own lives.

Hastily seizing a blanket from a corner of the wigwam, and wrapping himself up in it, the old trapper disappeared in one direction, while his companion stole like a shadow in another.

Whatever they intended to do must be done quickly, and five minutes had not elapsed before a wigwam was in flames at the farther end of the encampment, and a hostile war-whoop rang through the woods.

With a dexterity that appeared like magic hundreds of armed warriors sprang towards the point of alarm, while the squaws ran hither and thither, making night hideous with their yells.

But all too soon the subterfuge was discovered. No volley of arrows and bullets came from the timber, and the flames surrounding the wigwam were speedily extinguished. But another and still another fire blazed in different parts of the encampment.

Yet they were too valueless to demand attention, and a rush was made by the warriors for the prison house, to find that also in flames.

Then each intuitively knew what had happened, and they rushed for their horses to scour the country and cut off the fugitives.

But a few followed the chief to where the girl had been confined, to find the two old squaws who had guarded her—one of them the mother of the chief—quivering in the agonies of death, and the girl missing.

Outwitted, beaten at every point, with the fire communicating from wigwam to wigwam until half the village was burning, the great Horse-shoe acted like one bereft of his senses. He stamped the earth in impotent rage, tugged at his scalp-lock as if he would tear it out by the roots, and hurled imprecations upon his followers, forgetting how much depended upon speedy action.

But he was not long thus. He choked down his rage, and, having secured his horse, dashed madly away, with the blazing homes of many of the red-men illuminating the forest, so that he could see for a considerable distance.

With the feeling that he had baffled any that might follow, the old trapper was journeying along, though with all possible speed. For the first few miles he too had ridden, but as soon as the greatest danger had passed he dismounted in order to relieve the overburdened horse, and make him last as long as possible. And now that he had a little clear prairie before him he began to feel comparatively easy, and was talking almost gaily to the girl—save his regrets (more than shared by her) that Philip Lee was not with them.

"Heaven has been very good to us," he said; "it brought us out of great danger."

"But poor Lee," answered Maggie, sorrowfully.

"The boy is sharp, and will take care of himself. I don't think he's in any more danger than we are, and—oh, Heaven!"



[FOUND.]

The report of a rifle, the whistling of a bullet, and the heavy thud as it struck his shoulder, caused the exclamation, and before he could determine whence the shot had come the chief of the Sioux dashed forward, fairly rode him down, and trampled him under foot. But the trapper was not to be crushed into the dust like a worm without turning and stinging, and a quick blow of his hatchet effectually hamstringed the horse, so that warrior and steed rolled together upon the prairie.

"Go!" shouted Old Moscow to the girl. "Go! Ride for your life, and leave the old man to die." And he threw himself upon the Indian, and exerted all his strength to keep him from becoming disentangled and following.

But the frightened girl might not have taken the advice had the matter been left entirely in her own hands. Such, however, was not the case. The horse she rode, alarmed by the shot, was terrified by the frantic struggles of its wounded mate, the floundering of the men, and above all by the smell of blood, and dashed madly away with the rider clinging with her arms round his neck—a half-wild steed running away with a helpless, half-fainting girl! Away from strife that must bring death to one or both, and the last thing she saw was that the Indian had thrown the trapper upon his back—had his knees firmly planted upon his breast—one brawny hand upon his throat—and was whirling his hatchet with the other for the last fatal blow.

CHAPTER V.

When fears and perils thicken fast,
And many dangers gather round,
When human aid is vain and past,
No mortal refuge to be found.

Then can we firmly lean on Heaven,
And gather strength to meet and bear;
No matter where the storm has driven,
A saving anchor lives in prayer.

Eliza Cook.

A BRAVE girl, and brought up on the frontier, it was not very long before Maggie Grey awoke to the exigencies of her situation, and felt that it would be necessary to direct the frightened horse, or his instinct would guide him homeward, and she would be carried back to the village of the Indians.

She raised herself to a secure position, turned the horse upon the course she knew lay in an opposite direction to the home of the red-men, and encouraged him with hand and voice.

Through timber, slough, and prairie she continued her way—through valley and stream, and over rock and hill. Not, however, with the same speed as she had started.

Her heart bled for the poor, suffering animal that

had carried her so bravely, and, to relieve him as much as possible, dismounted and walked by his side until it grew so dark that she could scarcely see her way. But, determined not to stop in the midst of the timber, she groped her way until she had passed out of the gloom and gained the open prairie.

Here she fancied she might rest in peace, and, having tethered the horse so as to prevent his wandering to any considerable distance, she gathered the long grass and made for herself a soft bed, though resolving it should be one of rest merely—not slumber. With strange thoughts crowding upon her brain she lay, and wove bright dreams of love, with the young trapper, Philip Lee, for a hero, forgetting for a time the stern realities with which she was surrounded. But nature is oftentimes stronger than human resolution, and, despite her frequent upstartings and rubbing her eyes, at last all of earth disappeared, and she lay locked in heavy slumber.

But it was suddenly broken by the touch of something cold upon her forehead, and, believing it to be serpents, she started up in horror and fled screaming away. Yet she turned and looked to see what had disturbed her, then sank helpless to the ground as she saw that a dark object was following her, and bowed her head in expectation of instantly feeling a blow from a tomahawk or scalping-knife.

But no blow came. Why did the Indian hesitate? She summoned all her courage, raised her head and looked even as the cold, damp touch was being repeated, and saw to her infinite relief that it was only her horse—that she had been foolishly fleeing from her very best friend.

But what could cause such unusual actions? She spoke kindly to the horse, and he bowed his head, and she saw that he was trembling, and that his eyes flashed wildly, and he kept looking anxiously around.

"Poor fellow," she said as she gently patted his neck; "you must have become over-heated, and the night air has chilled you."

The sudden straining upon the rein lifted her to her feet, and she saw dark forms stealing round upon every side, red balls of fire flashing from out the gloom, understood the cause of his terror in an instant, and sank back with a groan of despair.

"Surrounded by wolves! Oh, Heaven!" she gasped.

With the same instinct of companionship that had caused the horse to crowd close to and touch her, she drew nearer to his side and laid her hand upon his mane.

He crouched down as he felt the touch, and, with the light of a new hope burning in her eyes, she made

a mighty effort and sprang upon his back. Like an arrow he darted away out into the open prairie, the girl clinging to him, and caring nothing in what direction she journeyed so as to distance the savage beasts.

But the poor girl saw with increasing terror that the wolves were gaining upon them, that the speed of the horse was sensibly diminished, and she did her utmost to force him forward.

As if feeling that another and more precious life than his own depended upon it, he responded by a magnificent burst of speed, and for a time held his own in the race. But it was useless—useless. It was only protracting misery.

She raised herself up as far as possible, and looked with exceeding anxiety around. Directly ahead, but so far as to be but dimly discernible, was another belt of timber. If she could only reach that she might cling to some of the branches and swing herself into a tree.

With cheering cries she urged the panting steed onward. Yet he would have needed no urging had speed and power remained in his limbs. Alas! they were no longer supple, and his breath was growing short.

"Oh, Heaven!" gasped the wretched girl, "if I could only reach the woods!"

She could now distinctly see the waving of the green branches—could distinguish tree from tree—could almost pick out the branches she could easily reach, the ones that promised safety and life. Scarcely a half-mile remained between her and them!

But every instant the wide-mouthed beasts were crowding nearer, until they ran side by side with the foaming horse—glaring upon her with their savage eyes and licking their huge jaws as they snuffed the swiftly coming feast. The horse, brave to the last, made a desperate rally, but his strength was short-lived.

The wolves dashed on in front and completely hemmed them in. There was no possibility of escape. The horse turned round and round, snorting with fear, and at last, with his proud spirit completely broken, he staggered, stumbled, reeled, and fell with a shrill neigh of agony, carrying the girl to the ground with him.

Then closer and more dense grew the dark circle of savage beasts, leaping, crawling, urging each other on, yet cowardly waiting for one more bold than the rest to make the first advance.

Seated upon the dying horse, with her hands upraised to Heaven, the despairing girl prayed that her death might be swift.

(To be continued.)



[THE YOUNG MINSTREL.]

THE CHARMED RUBIES.

CHAPTER XIII.

Say who among us with a heart
Where Feeling's holy sunshine falls
Can bear, untouched, to turn and part
From long-remembered household walls?

Eliza Cook.

VICTOR WOLFGANG TORQUILSTONE, son and heir of Wolfgang Torquillstone, of Torquillstone Castle. Such were his name and station. When but a lad his father died, and, having lost his mother at an early age, he grew up a little wild and erratic in his habits, and somewhat morbid in his feelings; but a nobler, better-hearted lad never walked the earth.

The one passion of his life was love of travel, and as soon as his father's affairs were settled, and had gone into the hands of the administrators, taking with him no treasure save the wonderful Charmed Rubies, which had been put into his hands when he stood on tiptoe by the bedside of his dying mother, he went forth, leaving his young sister and his magnificent old estate in the care and keeping of his relatives.

Years before, Alice Torquillstone, only sister of Wolfgang Torquillstone, had contracted a clandestine, unfortunate marriage with one Richard Livingstone, a mere adventurer, and from this marriage Guy Livingstone was the sole offspring, and when Wolfgang Torquillstone died, leaving his son and heir in his minority, this same Richard Livingstone came forward and declared himself appointed, by the last will and testament of the deceased earl, to look after the estate; and no person bringing forward just reasons why he should not, he was duly installed in the office of administrator, and commissioned with full control of the entire estate until the young earl should attain his majority.

In the meantime this young heir, taking with him the Charmed Rubies that had been in his family for centuries, started forth to gratify his love of travel and adventure. He went to Rome, Venice, then to the burning country of the Sphinx, and finally he sailed for China, and after that his friends lost sight of him.

His uncle, then resident with his family at Torquillstone Castle, expressed the deepest concern, and instituted every possible inquiry to learn something of his fate. And, at last, intelligence came. He had died, and was buried, somewhere in the South Sea Islands.

It was just the fate that one might have predicted for such a wild and reckless fellow. So spake his uncle with a sober face, and all the surviving members

of the House of Torquillstone went into mourning for the death of the young heir.

As a matter of course, the grand old estate descended to the next nearest relative, and that relative was no other than little sunny-haired Elaine, the child-sister that the young earl left in his uncle's care when he started out upon his travels.

But in a few short months, apparently to the great grief of the uncle and his family, and to the surprise and regret of all who knew her, little Elaine died, and the House of Torquillstone was left without an heir.

As a matter of course Richard Livingstone, husband of Alice Torquillstone, held the next claim. Very quietly, and with seeming regret, he took possession of his rights, and at once turned over the heirship, and the old and honoured title to his son Guy.

The last one of old Wolfgang Torquillstone's name was extinct; his son was buried in a foreign land; and little Elaine slumbered in the family vault.

Years slipped away, the grass grew green and rank about the costly marble beneath which little Elaine slumbered, and the name of the young heir was fast sinking into oblivion.

Torquillstone Castle, in the hands of its new master, bloomed out in unsurpassed splendour; and the young earl had learned to wear his honours with such grace that he was spoken of as one for whom a conspicuous career lay in store.

But in the height of all this magnificence and glory, one rainy night, when the halls at Torquillstone rang with music and revelry, a traveller, closely cloaked and hooded, appeared at the gate and asked for shelter.

Of course he was not refused, for Earl Torquillstone was noted for his hospitality. The servants conducted him in, and they gave him a seat at the table, round which two or three score of guests were already assembled; then the revelry went on afresh, this silent, shrouded figure still sitting there, like a death's-head at the feast, noting every motion and movement with his keen eyes that peered out from beneath his serge cowl. When the merriment waxed loud, and the red wine foamed high, he arose in silence, and, standing before the master of the castle, threw off his disguise.

"Richard Livingstone," he said, addressing his uncle, who sat in state beneath the great stag-horns that arched above the table. "Richard Livingstone, do you know me?"

The host glanced at the bronzed and bearded face that bent above him, and his own grew as white as death; but not for a single instant did he lose his self-control—though the hour that had

haunted him for years had come he had face to meet it.

"No, sir," he answered, quietly, "I have not that honour; but," he added as the stranger continued to stand before him, "perhaps my son's memory may be better than mine. Guy, my son, will you step this way?"

The young earl obeyed, confronting the strange guest with a face hotly flushed by excess of wine.

"This gentleman has escaped my recollection, Guy," said his father, carelessly; "do you happen to know him?"

Careless as were his father's words and manner, a peculiar something in his voice warned Guy Livingstone that the hour of trial had come; he had a strong will, and he called it up in all its force as his eyes met those of the strange man before him; but, in spite of his efforts, for a single instant he quailed and hesitated.

"I do not know you, sir," he answered, at last.

The stranger's steadfast gaze never faltered.

"I am Victor Wolfgang Torquillstone, heir to the earldom and master of this castle. Do you know me now?" he said, sternly.

The earl laughed as he replied:

"Your looks belie your assertion, sir, for I do not detect the slightest resemblance between you and the late earl. Poor Victor!" he added, with a sigh, "would to Heaven he could return! But he has been dead five years."

The stranger said no more; he saw at a glance the position his relatives had assumed, and their determination to maintain it, and he was not a man to bandy words and quarrel over his rights. He gathered up his cloak, and, turning his back upon the old halls of his forefathers, went out into the storm—the old stag-hounds, that were wont to lick his hands and fuddle at his feet in the days of his boyhood, braying from their kennels as if he were indeed a stranger and an alien.

"Poor fellow! he is demented," remarked Guy Livingstone, returning to his gay companions.

A few weeks after there was a great stir in the vicinity of the castle. The young heir had come home, asserted one party, while the other declared the whole story false, and the so-called heir nothing more than a poor, witless fellow, or, mayhap, some cunning cheat. Finally the case was carried into court. But the Livingstone party held possession of the castle, while its rightful young master had almost forfeited his identity by his long absence; and with the aid of bribery and well-concocted schemes they won the day.

There was no immediate proof of this strange

man's identity; he might or might not be the heir-at-law—who could tell? But just at this juncture a number of witnesses rose up to certify to his non-identity, and one Erhart Vanburg, an old sailor by occupation, testified that, with his own eyes, away out upon one of the South Sea Isles, he had seen Victor Wolfgang Torquilstone die, and had helped to give him the rights of burial.

There was a great deal else, arguments and proofs, and prolonged discussion; but in the end the verdict went against the rightful heir. Victor Wolfgang Torquilstone was dead, and this man was nothing more than a cunning usurper.

In accordance with the verdict, Sir Richard Livingstone held on to the earldom, and the true heir-at-law went forth a stranger, not only his fortune, but his very name and identity wrested from him.

It was a bold stroke, and it had met with rare success. Guy Livingstone could not well suppress his exultation; but the poor, expatriated son of Wolfgang Torquilstone, still holding on to his sole treasure, the Charmed Rubies, once more went forth a wanderer upon the face of the earth.

He was a strange man, caring little for wealth and honours, and so long as he stood alone in the world and the wrong touched no one but himself, he felt almost like suffering them to enjoy their ill-gotten gains, content to follow his old pursuits, and dream his quaint dreams in utter seclusion. But his soul was perplexed and troubled concerning the fate of the little sunny-haired sister he had left behind him when he started on his world-wide travels; and in the midst of all this, when he was living a kind of hermit's life in Switzerland, he met with Maud Montessor.

His hour had come. From the instant when he first looked upon her proud, imperial face he loved her, and in course of time his love grew into a passionate adoration.

Then he determined to woo and win her under an assumed name, and for her sake to devote his whole life and energy to disproving the bold falsehoods that had robbed him of his name and inheritance.

CHAPTER XIV.

The wild harp hath a witching spell

About its silver strings;

Can aught on earth excel the charm

Its pensive breathing brings? *Eliza Cook.*

In the meantime, while the deposed Earl of Torquilstone sat within the ruined chapel, listening to the voice of the winds that rose to a wailing roar without as the wintry day drew near its close, and to the melancholy beating of the distant surf, bemoaning his hard fate, and blaming himself by turns for ever having suffered his hot-headed love to get the better of his judgment; while he sat there, watching, hoping, waiting for one little word of assurance and comfort, torn by doubts and fears, resolving at one moment to present himself at the door of Montessor Hall and demand admittance of its laughty master in the name of his own rank, and of his loyal love, and at the next, knowing how worse than foolish such a course would be—how his love would be scorned, and his claims to rank and station ridiculed; maddened by despair, powerless, helpless as it were in the hands of a cruel fate, half tempted to relinquish all—love, fortune, even life itself—and by one mad plunge into the swirling billows to end at once his misery and his useless existence; while this strange man sat there in the gathering gloom, enduring all these inexpressible tortures, Cecil Holt was laying her plans for a daring adventure.

For days and weeks she had loitered about the grounds, hoping for some chance to communicate with her young lady, but none having occurred she had made up her mind to hear the lion in his den.

She was a brave girl, this Cecil Holt, and though nothing but a serving-maid, the blood in her veins was pure and good, and her name and fame were as spotless as the best of England's high-bred damsels. Fears for her young lady alone had restrained her through all the dreary, tedious days of the past week; and, sitting in her little bedroom on the morning of that second day of Torquilstone's waiting for an answer to his letters, she made up her mind that there was no more time to be lost; what she could do must be done quickly, and she made her arrangements accordingly.

About noon on the same day, just as Albert Dunn was hurrying to complete a door he had been making before closing his little shop for the dinner hour, his attention was arrested for an instant by the sweet notes of a harp, seemingly near at hand.

At another time he would have dropped his hammer on the instant, for he was a dear lover of music; but on this particular morning Albert was perplexed, vexed at himself and all the rest of the world. His work did not go on satisfactorily, his nails would not drive, and music confused rather than pleased him.

The secret of all this was that Albert was in love, and with no other lassie than Cecil Holt, the ex-maid of Maud Montessor.

They had been betrothed since midsummer, and were only waiting until the young man could save up enough to begin with to consummate their happiness at the altar.

But for the last week matters had not been going on altogether right with Albert. Cecil was too much occupied with other people's affairs to bestow upon him the amount of attention that he deemed his due; then she was not so frank and sincere as she had once been; she had secrets from him, and carried on affairs of which he was ignorant. Only within the last week she had made a wearisome journey amid the Wiltshire Downs, and when he wanted to know the object of such a tramp she had put him off with the idle excuse that she had friends there.

All these things combined worried the young man excessively, and on this particular morning especially. The more he hurried to complete his job the more tardy and banging his fingers became; and, just as he struck the last blow, the panel split in twain, thus spoiling all his labour and his material into the bargain.

He threw down his hammer with a hasty exclamation, and just then the dulcet notes of the harp sounded almost at his elbow, but he would not look or listen; the poor fellow was thoroughly vexed.

Seizing his green baize jacket, and slapping his paper cap upon his head, he banged the door after him, and went off with rapid strides in the direction of the highway. Twenty paces distant he came upon the harper, sitting under the hawthorn hedge. The harper arose as the young carpenter approached.

A lithe, graceful figure, clad in Highland plaid, and a nut-brown face, shaded by a profusion of short ringlets, above which sat a jaunty Scottish cap, ornamented by a tuft of scarlet feathers.

Despite his vexation, Albert paused for a moment, bestowing upon the young minstrel a glance of admiration, for, in all his life, perhaps, he had never seen a prettier picture than he made, standing there beneath the hedge in his young and ruddy beauty.

"Please, sir, a penny, to help a wandering harper." The voice was even sweeter and richer than the face.

Albert Dunn could not find it in his heart to deny. He drew out a shilling and tossed it on the sward at his feet. The lad picked it up with a graceful bow.

"Shall I play something now, sir?" he asked: "No, no," replied the carpenter; "I'm in a hurry, and can't stop to hear."

He was turning off, but the boy broke out into an old Scotch love song—a sweet, plaintive thing that Albert had sung with Cecil a hundred times, perhaps, in the happy days of their courtship, when he went up to see her at Montessor Hall, and they sat together by the great kitchen fire.

He stopped short, with a moisture like tears rising to his eyes.

"Sing that again, boy," he said as the minstrel finished.

He obeyed; and, at the close of the last sweet line, the carpenter threw down a second shilling, and hurried away, dashing his hand across his eyes. The minstrel boy broke out into a gay laugh.

"I shall pass!" he cried, exultingly; "if I have deceived him no other eyes will find me out. But this won't do. Not so fast, Mr. Albert, I must have a word with you."

Lifting his harp, he ran lightly across the green, and, making a cross-cut, confronted the carpenter again just as he reached the main highway. He looked up with a start of surprise.

"What now?" he questioned, impatiently.

"Another shilling, please," replied the minstrel, merrily.

"I've no more shillings to give away; go your way and don't bother me."

But the minstrel stood still, with his hand extended.

Albert Dunn grasped his shoulder almost angrily. "Boy," he said, "will you get out of my way?"

"Albert!" He gave a quick start, one sharp, searching glance, then:

"Cecil!" he cried; "can it be you?"

The girl broke out into ripples of gay laughter.

"Yes, Albert Dunn; and now confess that for once at least I have deceived you thoroughly."

"Indeed you have. I might have passed you a hundred times, and not have known you. What a charming minstrel you make," he added, his eyes lighting with admiration as they rested on her picturesque costume and short, curly hair; "but your face is so brown; will it wash off, Cecil?"

"Oh, yes, you silly fellow—but don't you think it becoming?"

The young man looked uneasy, and not a little grave.

"I don't know, Cecil," he replied; "but I like your own colour best, and your own dress too. Now, do tell me what put this freak into your head. You have not been like yourself of late."

Cecil smiled up into his troubled face.

"Poor, good Albert," she answered, gently, "don't mistrust me. I can see in your honest eyes just what you think. But come now, let's sit here under the hedge, and I'll explain everything to your satisfaction."

They sat down, side by side, and, placing her harp upon the ground before her, Cecil told him the story of her young lady's trouble.

"I must help her, Albert," she continued. "I shall never forget the poor, pale face when she begged me to do something for her. It will kill her if they force her to marry that man—and she loves the other one as she loves her life, and no wonder, for he looks like the king himself."

"What's his name?" asked Albert.

"No one knows much about him, not even Mistress Maud, but he calls himself Torquilstone—that's the name he mentioned when he gave me the letters."

Albert Dunn's face grew dark with anger.

"Torquilstone?" he repeated; "do you mean the Earl of Torquilstone? Is he the man you are working for?"

Cecil looked bewildered.

"The Earl of Torquilstone?" she said. "I don't know—who is the Earl of Torquilstone?"

"Why, Guy Livingstone to be sure."

"So he is, I had quite forgotten—but he isn't the man. Oh, no, indeed—he is the one they are going to make Mistress Maud marry."

"Who? Guy Livingstone?"

"Yes."

"Good Heaven! No wonder she's opposed to it, poor thing, for, if ever there was a base scoundrel, Guy Livingstone's one. I only wish I could get my fingers on his throat, I'd soon put an end to all this trouble."

"Why, Albert, what ails you?" questioned the girl, in amazement.

His face had grown purple with passion, and the veins stood out upon his forehead like knotted cords.

"A great deal, Cecil, more than you have ever dreamed of. I can't hear that man's name without almost losing my reason."

"What man? Guy Livingstone? He never injured you, did he?"

"Injured me! Yes; he has done me such a vile wrong that I shall detest him to my dying day!"

"Oh, Albert, don't! You look so terrible that you frighten me. Are you angry with me?"

He smiled and patted her cheek.

"No, little one, no, I could not get angry with you; but I wouldn't have Guy Livingstone see you in this pretty boy's dress for all the world; you must shun him, my little girl, as you would a viper; he is a bold, bad man."

"I shall not be likely to put myself in his way," Cecil replied, with a little flash in her brown eyes, "for, if I didn't think it was a sin to hate any person, I should hate him for my poor young lady's sake. Oh, Albert, we must save her, we must indeed."

The young carpenter started to his feet, growing terribly excited.

"Yes, we must," he said, his voice hoarse with wrath; "he must not have another victim—in six months he will trample on her heart as he did on poor Ellen's. She was as fair as Mistress Maud, and as pure, until he came with his false tongue and lured her away. Poor Ellen, poor Ellen! Oh, Heaven, it sets my brain on fire! I must settle that account yet."

Cecil stood quite still for a moment, awed into silence by his terrible passion, then she went to his side and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Albert dear," she whispered, "try and calm yourself, and tell me what it is that troubles you so. Who is Ellen? What has Guy Livingstone ever done to you?"

He turned upon her, his eyes full of doubt and pain.

"Don't mock me, Cecil," he said. "You know you have heard the disgraceful story long ago." "Albert, are you in your senses? I tell you that I don't know, don't comprehend a word you are saying."

"Don't know that Guy Livingstone has one wife already?"

"Yes, I know that."

"I thought so, and that wife is my sister—you know that too!"

For a moment she stood dumb with amazement; then a sudden light flashed up in her face.

"Oh, I see now!" she exclaimed. "I see it all now. I could not understand it before. Yes, Albert, she was just like you. She must have been your sister."

"Yes, she is my sister," he said, bitterly. "I never mentioned it before, because I had a faint hope that you might never have heard of it; but you have even seen her, it seems. How and when was it, Cecil?"

"Yes, I have seen her," she replied, slowly; "but I never dreamed, until this moment, of her being your sister. Two or three years ago, when I was down in Wiltshire, nursing an old aunt who was ill, I chanced to get acquainted with a sweet, pale, sad-looking woman, who lived in a little cottage, with not a soul but her baby, and obtained her living by mending nets and doing odd jobs for the fishermen. We got to be very intimate, and loved each other like sisters, and one day she told me her secret. How she was a happy girl, living with a mother and brother, who loved her as their lives, and Guy Livingstone came, and with sweet words and flattering promises, persuaded her to forsake her humble home and fly with him to one of luxury and grandeur. She was silly enough to listen to him, and one night she ran away, and they were married, and he took her to live with him at his castle. For a few months she was happy, but after that a change came. He ceased to care for her, grew weary of her society, and sent her off to that lonely little cot; after that she never saw him, or even so much as heard from him. She was too proud to go back to the friends she had forsaken, and she lived there, and supported herself and her baby by her own labour. Was this woman your sister, Albert?"

The young man was silent for several moments, and when he spoke at last his voice was husky and broken.

"Yes, Cecil," he said, "that was my sister—my pretty little Ellen."

"Where is she now, Albert?"

"I know not. I haven't seen her or heard from her since the night she left us."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Cecil. "I had counted so much on this thing. I even hinted to Mistress Maud that I knew a secret that would save her; and, a few days ago, I went all the way down to Wiltshire, hoping to find this poor woman and persuade her to come up and avow herself as the wife of Guy Livingstone, and put an end to this wicked marriage; but after all my tramp I found the cottage shut up and the poor woman gone. But surely you can find her, Albert; and, when it is known that she is his wife, poor Miss Maud will be saved. Even if we can't find her in time," she continued, eagerly, "couldn't you go up to the hall, or even to the church, and tell the whole story? Couldn't you do it, Albert?"

The young man's averted cheek grew crimson, and he looked down for a moment in painful embarrassment; at last he spoke, as if every word cost his proud heart a pang.

"Cecil," he said, "my poor, pretty little Ellen is not Guy Livingstone's wife in the eyes of the law; the minister and the marriage ceremony were both false. Poor little girl—poor little girl!"

The great, stalwart fellow bowed his head with something very like a sob, while Cecil stood apart, her eyes overflowing with tears, yet not daring to intrude even the words of love upon grief so deep and sacred. In a little while he looked up.

"I could never bring myself to mention it to you, Cecil," he said, "it cost me so. I thought so much of Ellen, and she was so pretty, with her blue eyes and pink cheeks. But you know now, and maybe you'll cast me off because of my sister's shame. 'Tis better you should know now than hereafter. It was his fault—the sneaking, smooth-tongued villain! He turned the poor little thing's head, and she couldn't help it. Poor little Ellen! she's suffered enough to pay for her folly. I was too hard on her—too hard. I see it all now. I've never seen her face since that last night, and I may never see it again. Poor little Ellen!"

Cecil had stolen to his side, and with a shy, sweet movement she bent over and dropped a kiss upon his brow. The simple act was more impressive than any words could have been.

"My darling, my darling," he murmured, caressing her hand, "and I have been fretting and worrying because you went down to Wiltshire, and even losing faith in you—you must pardon me, Cecil, you are all that I have left, and I am terribly jealous of you. If I should lose you, I believe I should give up at once."

"Never fear; there is no danger of losing me," she replied, gaily.

"I don't know," he replied, shaking his head. "It seems my fate to lose all I love. I lost my pretty little sister. Oh, Cecil, if I could only find her, and make amends for the past, I should be the happiest man alive. I was too hard on her, and now she's gone."

"Well, let us hope for the best; she may come back to the cottage; so keep a good heart. But see how the sun slopes down, and I have wonders to work

before night. One plan has failed me. I must try another. Albert, do you think you can take care of something very valuable?"

"Yes, I suppose I could; why do you ask?"

"Because I have something here," she replied, drawing the quaint, golden casket from her bosom, "that I want to leave with you. I am bent upon an adventure to-night; that's what made me put on this outlandish costume. I have two letters for Miss Maud, and I have undertaken to contrive some way to get them into her hands. I promised the poor gentleman to bring him an answer in three days, and he comes every evening to the old chapel, and waits and waits, with a look on his face enough to break one's heart. If ever there was a sin it's keeping him and Miss Maud apart; he loves the very ground she walks upon, and he's such a noble man—fit to be a king. He gave her these—see there, will you?"

She unclosed the casket, and held it before his dazzled eyes, the Charmed Rubies gleaming on their silken couch like a coil of living flame. He started back, with an exclamation of surprise.

"Magnificent, ain't they?" she continued, taking them out, and allowing them to slip through her fingers, while the sun caught up and reflected their splendours in a thousand glancing rays. "Miss Maud values them more than life; she gave them to me because she was afraid her father might get them, and I'd have no chance to return them to her; I'd rather die than lose them. I am going up to the park, and if I can obtain no sight of her I shall make an effort to get into the hall. My disguise deceived you so well that I don't think any one there will find me out. At any rate I shall risk it. I think I can work my way in, then I'll trust to chance for the rest. But I wouldn't dare to keep these rubies about me, and I want to leave them with you; now, Albert, take this casket, and don't suffer it to go out of your hands for a single instant until I come to take it back. Come, now, I must hurry; it's getting late."

She extended the casket towards him; he received it, and put it into his breast pocket.

"There it will be safe enough," he said; "but I can't let you run off in this mad adventure, Cecil; how do I know what may happen to you?"

"Oh, nonsense; don't be foolish, Albert Dunn; what can happen to me, do you suppose? Even if Sir Felix should find me out, he'll not lay violent hands on me."

"I don't know; at any rate I don't feel like letting you go."

"Oh, come, Albert, don't talk that way—I must—it's important that Maud should have these letters, and I've promised her lover an answer by to-morrow. I must do something; I shall never be happy unless I help my poor young lady out of this trouble."

"Let me go in your place—I'd like to meet Guy Livingstone; he and I have an account to settle, and the sooner the better. Let me go, Cecil; I'll manage to deliver the letters."

"Albert Dunn, will you do as I bid you? You are talking simple nonsense. Let me have my way now, and when it's all over I won't be contrary any more. You may name our wedding-day as soon as you like. Come, be good now, and say 'good bye'; I must go."

He caught her in his arms and covered her blushing face with kisses.

"My darling," he murmured, "go, then, and Heaven bless you."

She extricated herself from his embrace, and, taking up the harp, tripped lightly over the common.

"Take care of the Rubies," she called, looking back, "and come up to Mrs. Trent's to-morrow night."

The young man nodded in response, then watched her graceful figure till it disappeared from sight, with an aching foreboding at his heart that all his efforts would not still—a foreboding, alas! that proved terribly prophetic.

CHAPTER XV.

The best-laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley
And leave us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy.

BURNS.

AFTER leaving her lover, Cecil Holt, in her pretty dress, with the harp swung across her shoulder, bent her footsteps directly towards Montessor Hall. She had made no definite plan of action, she merely intended to gain admittance into the hall, and, if possible, by some means or other, contrive to give the letters to Mistress Maud. She sauntered along leisurely, brushing the dust from the dead grasses with her light step and trilling snatches of cheerful song, until she reached the great park gate, which, to her delight, she found unlocked, and, hurrying through, she entered the broad carriage-road that led in a serpentine sweep up to the grand front entrance.

Cecil advanced boldly, keeping the high road until

she reached the lodge gate, then she paused, to reconnoitre. Not a living soul was anywhere to be seen; the mastiffs slept in their kennels, the great oaken doors were closed, and the window of the western turret was closely curtained.

The girl paused, and, leaning against the trunk of a tree, surveyed the scene with sad, despairing eyes. How should she ever gain admittance, or find any possibility of communicating with the poor, pale victim who kept the weary watch within that gloomy turret-room.

But it must be done; the moments were slipping by, and it would soon be too late. But the puzzle was where and how to begin.

Taking up her harp, she proceeded to a large tree, some ten or twelve paces from the mansion, and, seating herself at the root, began to play a wild and touching love lay, full of indescribable pathos.

For several moments she played on unheeded, save when one of the gaunt mastiffs, disturbed in his nap, gave an uneasy yelp; but after a while she saw the curtain of the turret window cautiously drawn aside, and a white, ghostlike face pressed against the glass. Her heart began to throb, and her fingers grew tremulous, yet she managed to play on.

Years before, when she was a little girl, her old grandfather, who was a Welsh harper, had taught her tiny fingers some little of the skillfulness his own possessed; and, sitting there beneath the shadow of Montessor Tower, she brought it all into requisition, until the air rang with sounds of melody.

Still the white face remained against the glass, and presently the heavy window was raised, and Maud Montessor herself looked out, wan and changed, but peerless and imperial still.

Seeing the dear face once more, Cecil, forgetful of the part she meant to play, started to her feet with a glad cry. Maud leaned out, scanning the park with quick, eager eyes, but when she saw only the slight figure of the young harper the radiant light faded from her poor, pale face. He was not the one for whom she watched and waited.

Cecil put down her harp, and advanced a few steps, then she made a rapid sign, and, taking the letters from her bosom, held them before Maud's eyes. The poor girl put out her hands imploringly, as if to clasp them to her heart.

From her lofty window to the grassy turf where the pretty young harper stood was a long and dizzy distance. What should they do? For a few moments both stood silent, measuring the inaccessible space with despairing eyes; then, suddenly, Maud disappeared from the window. In two minutes' time perhaps, she returned again, with the carrier pigeon in her hands.

"Fly down, pretty bird," she said, coaxingly, smoothing its glittering plumage, and giving it a little toss; "fly down, and bring up my letter."

The bird fluttered out into the sunshine with a twitter of delight, poising itself on each wing alternately, as if enjoying its freedom to the utmost extent, then it sailed off, and perched itself on a branch of the tree beneath which Cecil had been sitting.

Maud looked on with her heart in her mouth, while Cecil, in her pretty harper's dress, ran forth and held up her hands, calling, softly:

"Come down, birdie; come down to me, birdie!"

Sure enough, as if possessed of human comprehension, the wonderfully trained creature flew down, and perched upon her shoulder.

Poor Maud could have clasped her hands with delight, but she looked on breathlessly, while Cecil took the last and lightest letter, and with a bit of trimming torn from her gay jacket fastened it securely about the pigeon's breast. There was not a soul in sight anywhere, and with a feeling of exultation she tossed the bird upwards, saying:

"Fly home, now, birdie, fly home to your mistress."

The pigeon was evidently quite pleased with its commission; it rose proudly beneath its burden and struck a direct course for Maud's window. In another moment she would have the precious letter in her hand.

But just then there came the shrill yelp of a dog and the sharp report of a rifle.

The poor, pretty bird sailed off a yard or two and fell to the ground, its snowy feathers dyed with blood; and, at the same instant, Guy Livingstone, stepping out from the covert of the trees, coolly picked it up, letter and all, and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to Cecil, who stood dumb and powerless with affright.

"Come, my pretty lad," he said, with a covert sneer in his wicked eyes, "there's no one here to appreciate your music, and I'm just in want of one of your profession. We are having a holiday at Torquillstone Towers, and want you for our minstrel. Come on."

With his grasp upon her shoulder Cecil felt herself powerless, but she tried to resist.

"I won't!" she said, tearing herself away. "Don't dare to touch me again!"

He gave a low whistle, and two dogs came bounding to his side. To one of these—a great, wolfish beast, with eyes like balls of fire—he gave a low command; and on the instant the dog seized Cecil by the sleeve of her jacket, uttering an angry growl and showing his teeth savagely.

"Bring her along, Champion," commanded his master.

Poor Cecil dared not resist.

From her turret window Maud looked on, and for the first time it occurred to her that the pretty harper who had tried so hard to deliver her letter might be none other than her poor, faithful Cecil; and, seeing her carried away like a prisoner by Guy Livingstone and his wolfish dog, she dropped on her knees at the window, utterly overcome by despair and grief.

In the meantime Guy Livingstone hurried his prisoner along, and as the dog snarled fearfully, and only held on to her sleeve the more firmly at the slightest resistance, the poor girl could do nothing but submit and suffer herself to be conducted through the park and out into the highway beyond.

The driver, a great, bull-headed fellow, with grizzly hair and beard, and the visage of a satyr, sprang down from his seat the moment they came in sight.

"So you've got the game?" he said, with a malicious laugh as he came forward to meet them.

"Oh, certainly, Champion never fails," replied Livingstone; "now, my little beauty," he continued, addressing the poor girl, who was almost unconscious from terror, "I am going to send you up to Torquillstone; I shall follow myself very soon, and shall expect you to entertain me with your sweetest songs. Champion, you rascal, let go!"

The dog released his hold on the instant.

"Now jump in," he continued, and as Cecil refused he made a sign to the driver, who seized her in his huge arms, without a word, and forced her into the carriage, and the door closed before she could get her breath.

"Now, Vanburgh," said Livingstone as the man mounted to his seat, "take this gay young harper down to Torquillstone, and give her a snug cage in the south wing—I shall be down, and look after her myself to-morrow. I want you to come back like the wind—there's better game to bag. If we succeed now, Vanburgh, this ugly business will be ended, and your fortune made, as well as mine."

"Ay, ay, sir," and as he spoke he touched his horse with his whip and swept off like a whirlwind.

CHAPTER XVI.

Duncan is in his grave;

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done its worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further. *Macbeth.*

THE sun was setting—a pallid winter sun, going down in a clear, opal sky. About Montessor Hall everything seemed as silent as the grave; the deer had couched themselves beneath the trees, the gaunt mastiffs slept in their kennels; and the domestics and retainers were pretty well housed, for the air was keen and frosty. The window of the western turret was closely curtained, and lit by a solitary taper.

In the vicinity of the old chapel the winter twilight deepened rapidly; although the sun was but just down, beneath the ivy-grown arches it was already dark. The deposed Earl of Torquillstone, as we now recognize our mysterious stranger, was again at his post, waiting, watching, hoping, but no messenger had come, and this was the third evening. From the fallen altar, as the chill night began to settle around him, he rose up with a weary sigh, and, leaving the chapel, walked out into the open green that fronted Montessor Towers.

With his arms folded across his breast, and his grand, gloomy face clearly defined against the tinted opal of the West, he stood there, pondering upon his own hard fortunes as he gazed up at the grand old mansion before him. The home of his forefathers was grander and more stately, the blood in his veins prouder and purer, than anything of which the haughty old Sir Felix Montessor could boast, yet he stood there homeless and nameless, an outcast and an alien, not daring to enter into the presence of the woman he loved. And the man who had wronged and ruined him was his rival. It was a hard fate. As he thought it all over, gazing up at Maud's high window, the veins stood out upon his brow like great cords, and he clenched his teeth in desperation. He could not endure it any longer; he would go up to Montessor Hall at once, and meet his rival face to face. They should not steal his last treasure from him. But just at that instant there came a quick flash, a sharp report, and the whizz of a pistol ball, and almost simultaneously the earl fell to the

ground. For two minutes, perhaps, he lay where he had fallen, his white, marble-like face upturned in the faint light of the silver crescent hanging in the far West, the blood flowing profusely from a wound just below his shoulder; then a couple of men, closely masked, rushed out from a thicket hard by.

"Your shot told, Vanburgh," said the first, peering down anxiously into the prostrate man's face. "He's done for this time. Come, we've no time to loiter; up with him."

His companion obeyed with alacrity. Raising the wounded man, he dragged him along until they reached an opening which led to the highway, where a close carriage stood in waiting. With some difficulty they succeeded in getting the dead man within; then, both mounting the box, they drove like lightning through the starry winter night.

On and on, like the wind, past happy homesteads, where little children were hisping their evening prayers, through stately parks, and under the shadow of ancient towers—a stately equipage—none who saw it flashing by, in the tremulous light of the young moon, dreaming or suspecting what a living horror it carried.

Towards daybreak they drew rein at an old chapel a mile or so from Torquillstone Castle, a quaint, old-fashioned building, surrounded by innumerable graves and gravestones.

Over this silent city of the dead the dim gray of dawn cast a ghostly light as the two men descended, and stood for a moment taking breath, before commencing their terrible work. One of them removed his mask, revealing the white, distorted face of Guy Livingstone.

He had been a dissolute man for years, but until that hour he had kept his hands clear of blood. It was his first crime, and the look of horror on his face was terrible.

"Vanburgh," he said, gasping for breath, and turning hurriedly from the white face that lay amid the crimson cushions of the carriage, "this is awful work, I shall be heartily glad when it's over."

His companion laughed, and proceeded to remove the murdered man from the carriage as coolly as if he had been a billet of wood.

"You're a young hand," he said, significantly; "wait a bit longer, and you won't be apt to sicken at the sight of blood."

Livingstone shuddered. "Perhaps not," he replied, "but I hope not to have much practice in this kind of work—however, we're in for this now, there's no backing out."

"Not a bit of it, we must go on to the end."

"I wonder what that will be—but I am wasting time. Come on, Vanburgh, 'twill be daylight directly."

The man thus addressed obeyed promptly. "But you'll have to lend a hand," he said, after several ineffectual efforts to raise the powerful form of the dead earl; "this fellow's like lead."

Livingstone, his face white with horror, was forced to raise the poor, lifeless head of the man he had so wronged.

Between them they bore him along in the faint glimmer of the breaking dawn, until they reached an old vault thickly overgrown with ivy. It had been a costly structure in its time, but the gleaming marbles had become tarnished by long exposure, and were falling into ruins, but the door still remained, and was fastened by heavy bolts.

The man, Vanburgh, put down his burden, and proceeded to unbar this door; then they took up the dead man again, and, descending the slippery steps to the dreary, darksome vault below, they laid him down upon the lowermost floor, in the chill, desolate gloom, and, hurrying back, shut the ponderous door.

"Now," said Vanburgh, with a hideous laugh, as he slid the heavy bolts, "I think we're rid of him this time—he'll not be very likely to trouble us again."

Guy Livingstone walked away without a word, glancing over his shoulder at the vault with a shudder; just then the smouldering fires of dawn flashed up into a ruddy blaze, and over Torquillstone Castle the glad morning broke clear and cloudless.

But in the damp charnel-house, under the very shadow of his boyhood's home, Victor Wolfgang Torquillstone was entombed—for ever imprisoned from the light of day.

Guy Livingstone was Earl of Torquillstone in truth; he had vanquished his rival at last.

(To be continued.)

THE monster Russian gun which burst at Cronstadt a short time back when being first "proved" cost 40,000 roubles, or more than 5,000*l*.

DISCOVERY OF ANTEILUVIAN REMAINS.—A curious cave has just been discovered on the beautiful property of Mr. A. Heaton, in North Wales, about three miles from the sea shore, to which it is supposed to extend, as it was probably formed by en-

croachments of the sea. A large number of antediluvian remains was found in this cave, and among others a complete skeleton of a glutton, which is believed to be almost the only one ever found in Great Britain.

LIFE'S SHADOWS.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TESSA could scarcely believe the evidence of her senses in thus finding herself a prisoner in the house of Squire Todhelly. She tried the door again in a sort of amazement, but the fact was beyond all doubt that it was securely fastened upon the outside.

"That is the kind of father I have!" she said, aloud, her lip curling. "He is leagued with his cowardly host to force upon me a loathsome marriage. He means to keep me a prisoner here until I yield to his demands. If he thinks any weak fears will persuade me to marry Squire Todhelly, and thus perjure my own soul, he does not know Tessa Holm!"

She sat down in the nearest chair, her pure cheeks flushing with indignation, and her gray eyes glowing. Then she proceeded, as calmly as she could, to review her situation.

She was a prisoner at the Grange—in the house of a man whose personal reputation was so bad that no lady could remain long under his roof without suffering a blighted name.

Her father was willing to let this blight fall upon her—nay, he seemed eager that it should. It was, Tessa said to herself, as if her father were her enemy. She could not rid herself of the impression that he was working against her, and with a purpose.

"My father does not love me," she thought, with a terrible pang at her heart, "and I cannot love him. There is a barrier between us, and sometimes I feel a deadly terror of him, as if he meant me evil. Why should he desire to force me into an unwelcome marriage with Squire Todhelly? Is it that he is poor, and expects to get money by bartering me? Or is it, as I cannot help fancying, that he would be delighted to make me miserable for life? The idea seems preposterous, but I cannot rid myself of the impression that he is working to some evil end. Why did he tell me that my mother was dead when she lives? Why did his eyes glare when he spoke of her? Why did he mutter that he would be revenged upon her? Does he mean to be revenged upon her through me?"

She drew from her pocket the little sketch of Ignatia Redruth, and studied it with a longing intensity. Every feature of the lovely, girlish face underwent her scrutiny. There was not a weak line in that rarely beautiful countenance, nothing but innocence, brightness, and goodness. Tessa's soul yearned towards her mother as she looked upon the smiling picture.

"Not even an angel could persuade me that she was bad!" she murmured, in her passionate young voice, kissing the picture rapturously. "She was—as pure as a star."

She recalled her father's face, comparing it with this picture of her mother. The satyr-like countenance of Captain Holm, with its evilly gleaming eyes and sardonic smile, made her shudder as she contrasted it with the likeness of her mother. Like a flash of light, a portion of the truth dawned upon her soul. Her mother was the innocent and injured one. It was her father who was base and unworthy.

She remembered her father's sinister looks, his inexplicable smiles, his inscrutable expressions of countenance, and her pure instincts interpreted them aright in the sudden dawn of her comprehension of him. It seemed to her, as she now reviewed the situation, that she was regarded by Holm simply as an instrument in his hands, and that he meant to employ her in working out upon her mother some hideous scheme of revenge.

"It is well that I have fathomed his designs," she murmured, softly. "It shall never be my hand that wounds my mother. She is rich and titled, and my father thinks perhaps it would wound her pride cruelly to unite her daughter to a dissolute scoundrel. Perhaps she loves me, despite the fact that I am the daughter of her first husband," and a tender flush transfigured the small pale face, and lighted up the glorious eyes, "and my father desires to show me to her some day when I am unhappy, and dragged down by a miserable marriage! He shall not succeed in his vile attempt!"

If her resolution to fly from the Grange and return to her friends in London had lacked energy and force, it now needed them no longer. The resolution became a fixed purpose, and Tessa revolved in her mind various plans for effecting it.

As the morning wore on she removed her hat and outer wrappings and sat down by her fire. At one o'clock the luncheon bell rang, and, be-

fore its clangour had died out, a key grated in her lock, the door opened, and Captain Holm, with a mocking smile, stood upon the threshold.

"Is your rebelliousness subdued, Tessa?" he inquired, with a sneer.

The girl flashed up at him a mutinous face, at sight of which Holm looked a little graver, although in his eyes gleamed an expression of conscious power.

"Ah, not yet!" he said. "Very well, Tessa. Indulge in your little pettish tempers as long as you choose, only I may as well remind you that you might as well hurl yourself against a wall of solid rock as attempt to combat my will. You don't know me yet, and you will do well to pray Heaven that you may never know me at my worst."

His cold, impassive voice gave a dread significance to his words. Tessa shuddered with a thrill of foreboding.

"Have you no love for me?" she asked.

"Bah! I hate that word!" cried Captain Holm. "I told you I did not love you. I know no such thing as natural affection, and the very thought of it sickens me. I do not want useless sentiment between you and me, and I will not feign for you an affection I do not feel. You seem to me to belong to your mother. I have neither lot nor partnership in you. You have not my features or my character. But I am your father, and consequently your guardian and the disposer of your future. Think of me as your master!"

"And you still insist that I shall marry Squire Todthely?" asked Tessa, with glittering eyes.

"I do. You will do well to yield gracefully, for yield you will! You are only a weak girl in the hands of a powerful man. Remember that little fact. But we must not keep our host waiting. Take my arm and come with me to the breakfast room."

"I prefer to follow you," said Tessa, undauntedly.

Captain Holm approached her, drew her reluctant arm within his, and led her from the room and down the stairs to the breakfast room. Todthely awaited them there, and came forward with expressions of regret at Tessa's contumacy, which had rendered a violent procedure on the part of her father necessary for her benefit; but the young girl checked him haughtily, and with a flushed face he took his place at the table.

The meal, it is scarcely necessary to remark, was eaten by Tessa in an almost total silence. Captain Holm noticed, however, that there was not a trace of sullenness on the grave, sweet brow, but he was somewhat puzzled at the resoluteness in Tessa's gray dark eyes. He did not believe that this slight, frail girl, who was so ignorant of the world and its ways, would have the audacity to attempt a flight from him in the face of his threatenings, yet he did not quite like her self-possessed and quietly determined manner.

Tessa sipped her chocolate and ate her portion of cold pastry and other delicacies with what appetite she could summon. Captain Holm and Squire Todthely, dismissing the one servant, engaged in an animated discussion of the changes to be made in the Grange after the squire's prospective marriage, and Tessa was forced to listen to arguments about windows and doors, a new wing, and furniture to be ordered from town.

"I shan't grudge any expense," said the squire, tossing off his wine. "I shall have the prettiest bride in the shire, and I mean to do honour to her. We'll see if people will decline to associate with Mrs. Tom Todthely."

Tessa's lips curled in a haughty disdain, but she made no response. The luncheon was presently over, and Tessa arose, but Captain Holm was at her side in an instant, and drew her arm within his and conducted her to the drawing-room.

At the usual hour of dressing for dinner Holm escorted Tessa to her room with an exaggerated courtesy and a close grasp upon her arm, and, ushering her into her chamber, turned the key upon her.

Tessa quietly resumed her seat by the fire. She had on her gray travelling suit, and her impulse was not to change it. She was truthful, honest, and straightforward, and could not feign a submission she did not feel. She saw plainly that she stood upon the brink of a deadly peril, and it was her father's hand that was stretched out to push her over. Her determination to escape from him strengthened with every instant.

When the dinner bell rang, and Captain Holm again appeared in Tessa's doorway and looked upon the little soberly clad figure in the red glow of the firelight, his face darkened and a savage expression distorted his sensual lips.

"Not subdued yet?" he muttered. "We'll see how long you will hold out, my little lady."

He took Tessa's arm again in his, and led her below to the dining-room. The meal passed much as the luncheon had done, the two confederates argumentative, and Tessa mostly silent.

It was the custom of Captain Holm and his host to linger over their wine, but on this occasion their stay was cut short, and they returned to the drawing-room with Tessa.

There was a piano, with a hoarse, cracked tone, in the drawing-room, and at Holm's request Tessa played and sang for her two persecutors. Under cover of the music the two men talked in low tones.

"A fine voice," said Holm as Tessa's pure, liquid notes caught his hearing in a pause of the conversation. "I could make a public singer of the girl. By George! I wonder I didn't think of that before. It would be a fine thing to humble the girl's mother; but, after all, the disposition I proposed to make of her is considerably worse, considered from her mother's point of view!"

And his face lighted up evilly.

"The girl seems obstinate," muttered Todthely, uneasily. "You won't let her tire you out or win you over?"

The look on Holm's face sufficiently reassured the squire.

"She looks as if she were meditating an escape," said Todthely, thoughtfully.

"She means mischief," said Holm, lightly. "I have seen mutiny in her eyes and mischief in her heart ever since that wretched Mrs. Gwynne was here. But I understand women, and I'll undertake to subdue the veriest Katherine of them all. Petruchio might have taken lessons of me. The first thing to teach the girl is her own powerlessness. That lesson she will learn during the next few hours. By to-morrow night she will be as humble and submissive as any spaniel."

Todthely was not quite convinced that Holm understood Tessa's nature, but he interposed no suggestions of his own. He was half in awe of the young girl, and wholly in love with her, and was not at all scrupulous by what means he won her, provided that she became his wife.

At ten o'clock Tessa arose, and Captain Holm was on his feet at the same instant.

"Bring a hammer and nails, Todthely," he said, "and come up to my daughter's room. Nay, you had better go first and nail down her windows securely. I do not intend that Tessa shall give us the slip in the night, even if she had the physical and mental strength necessary for the feat. A good general never neglects precautions."

Todthely assented, and hurried away on his errand.

Tessa, flushing, resumed her seat.

The sound of hammering in the room above them was soon heard. It was some minutes before the sound ceased, and the squire, heated and perspiring, returned, announcing that Tessa's chambers were ready.

Captain Holm conducted Tessa upstairs. At the door of the young girl's sitting-room the two encountered Mrs. Podd, the housekeeper, who had been drawn to the spot by the unusual sound of hammering, and she had taken advantage of the squire's departure from the scene to make an investigation of his proceedings. There was a look of surprise on her round, good-natured face as she turned from a contemplation of Tessa's windows, and she started guiltily as she was met by Captain Holm and his daughter.

A glance at the pair told her that Tessa was a prisoner.

"Stand aside, woman!" said the captain, in a domineering voice that aroused her enmity on the instant. "What are you prowling about here for at this hour? Be off, or I will report you to the squire!"

The woman muttered that she had been in to replenish Miss Holm's fire, and to put a pair of lighted candles on her shelf. She moved away sullenly as she spoke, but her glance met Tessa's, and the young girl, in one wild look, telegraphed to her an appeal for help.

No answering look gleamed in Mrs. Podd's dull eyes, no flash of intelligence brightened her red face. Tessa's heart fell before the housekeeper's unmeaning stare.

"No help there!" thought Tessa, bitterly.

Mrs. Podd retreated down the long hall, and disappeared in a side corridor that led to her own chamber. They heard her close her door with a sullen crash.

Captain Holm smiled. The incident rendered him almost good-humoured. He led Tessa into her room, and made an examination of the windows of the sitting-room and bedroom, finding them well secured. The wooden shutters inside the windows were also made fast, beyond the strength of a girl like Tessa to unloose.

"You see that you are helpless," said the captain. "Let the discovery teach you wisdom. When I come to you in the morning I shall expect to find you submissive, as a daughter should be."

He examined the door opening from the bedroom into the hall. It was locked, and the key was in his pocket. He went out by the sitting-room door, and looked that also.

Tessa waited until the sound of his steps had died out in the hall, then she sprang up and examined the windows for herself. A brief trial of her strength convinced her that she could not effect her escape in that direction.

Undaunted and resolute, she turned her attention to the idea of picking the lock of one of her doors. She had heard or read that the feat was one of easy accomplishment. But she might as well have undertaken to make bricks without straw and without experience. The locks were of the kind known as mortice locks, and were set each in a massive oaken door of immense thickness.

Tessa had only a slender hair-pin and a penknife with which to achieve her object, and she was not long in acknowledging her defeat in this direction also.

What was next to be done?

She paced her floor for a little while in deep thought, but the enigma was beyond her power to solve.

"Escape is impossible," she said, at last, sighing. "I shall have to wait until their vigilance relaxes. I might dart out of the drawing-room possibly, but they would pursue me and inevitably overtake me. I cannot pretend to submit to my father's unjust will. I must wait. Surely Heaven has not abandoned me!"

She went into her bedroom, and, kneeling in the shadow of her faded bed-curtains, prayed with the simplicity and confiding faith of a little child that Heaven would bring her safely out of her perils, and let her look upon her mother's face.

She was still kneeling there when a faint tapping sounded on a door at the side of her bedroom. This door had been locked before Tessa came into the house, and, as Tessa had surmised, simply opened into an adjoining chamber.

The suite of three rooms had been formerly used as family chambers, the third room, from which the faint knocking now emanated, having served as a child's nursery.

Tessa sprang up and ran to the door, with the idea that a portion of her prayer at least was about to be answered.

"Who is there?" she whispered, eagerly, putting her mouth to the key-hole.

"It's I—Mary Podd," came a response, in a husky, warning whisper. "Hush, miss, for Heaven's sake. The squire would bellow the roof off for all the world like a mad bull if he suspected what I was up to. I've got a key as fits this door, and I'm a coming in."

She inserted the key cautiously in the lock, opened the door softly, and entered the dimly lighted bedroom.

Tessa nearly embraced her in her joy.

The housekeeper looked at the young prisoner curiously, and demanded:

"What have they shut you up here for, miss?"

"Because they want to force me into a marriage with Squire Todthely," cried Tessa, "and I'd rather die than marry him."

Mrs. Podd smiled grim approval. In truth, although she was older than the squire, and of a station far beneath his, she had dared to aspire to become mistress of the Grange. Todthely's low tastes, his familiarities with his servants, and the fact, which Mrs. Podd well knew, that the best houses among the neighbouring gentry had long since been closed to him, had given her ground upon which to build her hopes. She had therefore seen, in the lovely young guest at the Grange, a rival from the first, and she was accordingly anxious to be rid of her dangerous proximity to the squire.

"You are quite right, miss," she said. "It would be like mating Beauty along of the Beast, if I do say so. Why don't you ask your pa to take you away?"

"I have," said Tessa, sorrowfully, "but he would not hear me. I threatened to go away alone, and he has imprisoned me here, as you see. I have friends in London who will protect me. If I could only get to Wimbourn Minster—and I can walk there—I could easily find my way home. Oh, Mrs. Podd, help me to my freedom! Only assist me to escape from this house, and I will bless you all my life!"

She caught the housekeeper's fat hand and pressed it as she continued to plead for her liberty.

Mrs. Podd's own heart echoed the girl's prayers, and Mrs. Podd's own interests and schemes added their force to Tessa's persuasions.

"If I only dared," said the housekeeper, doubtfully. "It's a dangerous thing to meddle between father and daughter. The law gives the father supreme control of a minor child—"

"I know," interposed Tessa, trembling. "But no one need suspect that you have helped me. I will bear all the blame if I should be caught or overtaken. Could we not leave the key in this side of the lock, as if I had found it in the room?"

Mrs. Podd's face brightened.

"The very idea!" she exclaimed. "And even the squire won't know that that is not the truth of

the matter. Put on your things, miss, and I will let you out of the house."

Tessa expressed her gratitude warmly, and hastened to put on her sash, furs, hat, and veil, and to throw about her figure a long, circular waterproof cloak. Then, taking up her small parcel, she was ready for her flight.

Mrs. Podd extinguished the light of the two candles, now burning low. The hour was twelve, and Captain Holm and Squire Todhethy, as well as the household, were asleep.

"Follow me," said the housekeeper, in a whisper. "Be as still as a mouse, miss. Come."

She opened the door and conducted Tessa into the adjoining chamber, which was dark. They crossed the floor, and emerged into the lonely hall.

Here no light, save a ghostly glimmer from without, was visible. They halted and listened, then, hearing nothing, crept softly down the wide staircase to the lower hall. Here again they paused, Tessa's heart beating like a drum.

Presently Mrs. Podd, summoning up her courage, which had momentarily faltered, took Tessa's trembling hand, and led her along in the gloom past the door of the drawing and breakfast rooms into a little side corridor, from which a door opened upon a porch that fronted the side lawn.

This door was bolted and chained. The two, working cautiously and slowly, and listening often, undid the bolts and raised the chains, turning pale in the darkness whenever a clinking of the chains was heard. But at last the door was freed, and gently opened.

Tessa was on the threshold of her freedom.

"There are no dogs loose," whispered Mrs. Podd. "You know the road to Wimborn Minster? It's a straight road nearly. Keep to the travelled road, and you'll be all right. It's a rough night, miss. You are sure," added the housekeeper, with a sudden thrill of pity, "that you are doing what is best in running away?"

"Quite sure," answered Tessa, cheerfully. "Heaven bless you for your kindness to me this night, Mrs. Podd. Good-bye!"

She pressed the housekeeper's fat hands fervently in her joy and gratitude, then moved down the steps, and was lost in the darkness.

Mrs. Podd, simply closing the door, but not fastening it, stole back to her own room.

Captain Holm and Squire Todhethy slept on, unconscious that their prize and intended victim had taken her destiny into her own hands and had flown.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE night on which occurred Tessa's flight from the Grange was one of the coldest and wildest that even January can produce. The sky was dark almost to blackness; the wind was strong and keen and fierce, and there were frost and snow in the air. The trees bowed before the wild gale, and as Tessa flitted across the lawn towards the gates and the highway she could hear the wild shrieks and moans of the winds through the intergrown pines of the Squire's Coppice and wailing along the Ghost's Walk.

The girl had a brave heart, and she did not hesitate in the task she had undertaken. Better the cold and the storm and the darkness than the fate from which she was fleeing. Better the keen wind, cutting its way to her very bones—better the frost and the snow—than the merciless persecution that was dealt to her by the man who called himself her father. Better death even than a life as the wife of Squire Todhethy. Better a grave in the snows on the wide Dorset heaths than to allow hers to be the hand which should stab to the heart her beautiful unknown mother!

Letting herself out at the gates, she compressed her scarlet lips, bowed her head, gathered closely about her the long folds of her heavy cloak, and gallantly breasted the fierce winds with which she must fight her way step by step, inch by inch, over the many miles that lay between her and Wimborn Minster.

Walking swiftly, as if she felt herself pursued, Tessa soon left behind her the ghostly outlines of the Grange; and the estate, with its orchards and plantations and fields, was also passed, and the girl was out upon the level heaths, with only the black sky above her.

The winds had full sweep now, there being no trees to break their force, and Tessa was buffeted at every step. More than once she was swept from her feet, and it seemed as if fierce hands were tugging at her garments to tear them from her.

Yet she did not falter, or think of turning back. One mile, two miles, three miles, were thus fought for and placed behind her, and ten weary miles farther remained to be conquered.

A noble heart beat in the girl's bosom; a gallant and brave soul dwelt within her slender and frail figure. Not yet did she think of a return to the Grange—not yet, though the wild gloom that raged upon the Dorset heaths seemed peopled by demons fighting for her as their prey—not yet, although the

cruel sleet began to beat upon her head and face and to pelt her as with sharp stones.

"It's a terrible night," said Tessa, winding her veil about her head in a manner to protect her face without obscuring her strained and eager vision. "An awful night! But Heaven will protect and guide me over this almost trackless waste, and why should I fear?"

Yet if her high courage held out, her physical strength did not. Her steps began to falter, her breath to come in quick, panting gasps, and her figure to sway heavily backwards and forwards.

At last she stumbled against a wayside stone, and nearly fell upon it. Struggling to regain her footing, she sat down to rest. Her head sank to her knees, and a delicious restfulness crept over her. The winds assailed her with a spiteful fury: their moans sounded in her ears like the wails of lost and wandering souls; the sleet beat upon her, and the wild gloom grew yet wilder and darker. Deafening was the Pandemonium that raged around her.

"I must be moving," said Tessa as the minutes passed. "They may discover my absence and pursue me."

She arose slowly and pressed forward wearily. Her feet seemed strangely heavy. Her breath came thickly. Her gray and star-like eyes looked up at the black sky in piteous appeal, but the little feet staggered on, she scarcely heeding which way they went.

The girl sat down to rest repeatedly in the next hour, but no rest came to her in those brief periods of inaction. Her body seemed to throb at every point. Her head and heart alike ached. The sleet ceased to fall, but the sky did not lighten. And the girl, rising with a start after each brief way-side pause, wandered on and on. With the wind pressing her back, and her feet clinging as if clogged to the earth, and her strength ebbing at every movement, she scarcely made two miles of progress in that hour's terrible struggles, and there remained still eight miles to go.

"I am so tired, so thirsty!" she murmured, pitifully, as she went on. "I shall sink down soon. I can go but little farther."

Yet she staggered on bravely. Presently the soft flakes of snow began falling swiftly and thickly, and the slight, bending figure bore a white burden upon its shoulders.

Thicker and thicker fell this blinding snow, and Tessa could not trace her pathway. She feared that she had strayed from the road, but she was so utterly weary that the fear was only vague and pangless. A cloud like the fog of snow seemed to settle on her senses.

She was unconscious now of cold or wind or flight. She was wandering she knew not whither, and kept to her feet only by a blind instinct rather than any impulse of reason.

This could not long endure, and it was ended at last by a misstep. As Tessa's foot sank into a little hollow in the road her body fell forward on the ground.

She had not strength to rise again, but lay there moaning pitifully, until a strange sense of sleepiness crept over her, and her eyes closed and her senses were benumbed. The soft snow fell upon her like a winding-sheet; the winds sweeping over the heaths seemed wailing her requiem.

Tessa in all her young life had never been so near to death as in that hour. She was falling into a sleep that was the vestibule of death, and already the dread angel was hovering above her, when that Providence that had watched over her all her days reached out an arm to protect her still.

Suddenly, even as she was drifting into a total unconsciousness, a sound came through the storm and the night that roused her from her trance. It was near at hand—startlingly near—the sound of wheels on the frozen road.

Tessa's first thought was that her father was coming in pursuit of her. But, greatly as she feared him and loathed the lot he had apportioned her, the love of life was strong within her.

Gathering up all her waning strength that had so nearly fled from her, she struggled to her knees, and, putting back her golden hair that the wind had loosened and was blowing about her small pale face like a golden mist, she stretched out her arms and called feebly for help.

The wind bore her words in an opposite direction, and the vehicle, dimly seen, was now within ten feet of her. Another minute and it would have passed, leaving her there to die.

With sudden strength Tessa arose to her feet and stretched out her arms. Her cloak, her veil, and her long golden hair streamed out like banners. Covered with snow, she looked like some sheeted ghost as she called out, piteously:

"Help! help! or I die!"

A cry of amazement came from the interior of the little hooded chaise, and the big, powerful horse was drawn up abruptly on his haunches close beside the storm-worn fugitive.

Then a man, lithe and active as any chamois,

leaped from the vehicle, and advanced towards Tessa, who fell forward into his arms, exhausted and unconscious.

The stranger, with a pitying and wondering exclamation, lifted Tessa into the chaise, and deposited her upon the warm cushions. Then he sprang in after her, started his horse, and continued his course towards Wimborn Minster.

The horse was left to his instinct for guidance—the safest plan in that snow-storm—while his driver heaped blankets and lap-robos about Tessa, and chafed her hands and felt her pulse with a keen anxiety.

"She has only fainted!" he said, aloud. "Yet her face feels cold and rigid."

He took from his pocket a small travelling match-case and struck a light, which he protected from the wind with his hat.

The fitful flicker of the tiny waxen taper fell upon Tessa's face, and he recognized her on the instant. The brief small glare was blown back towards his own face, revealing it as the noble and handsome countenance of Tessa's defender, Sir Victor Cheswick!

"Miss Holm!—and here!" he ejaculated as the light went out. "Gracious Heaven! What can have happened to make her a wanderer in this wild storm?"

He produced a small wicker-flask filled with brandy, which he had provided himself with to prevent a chill on his night drive, and gently forced its mouth between Tessa's lips.

He gave her a liberal draught of the warming liquid, and, as she began to stir in his arms, he restored the flask to his pocket, and again chafed her hands and softly wiped her wet, uncovered face.

A few minutes more, as they drove swiftly onward, and the warm tide of life pulsed anew in Tessa's veins, and reason and memory asserted themselves, she struggled to free herself from Sir Victor's clasp, and said, in a weary, hopeless voice:

"I wish you had let me die in the snow, sir."

"Tessa! Miss Holm!" cried a voice that thrilled her with sudden joy and ecstasy.

"What! It is not my father?" she ejaculated.

"It is Sir Victor Cheswick!"

"You know my voice?" exclaimed the young baronet, joyfully. "Yes, it is I, Miss Holm. Thank Heaven I came along as I did. I am on my way to London, whither I have been called on sudden business. I have to start by the early train from Wimborn Minster, and chose to drive over at this hour rather than to wait a few hours and then be blocked by the snow. But what brought you out on foot and in the storm, if I may ask?" he added, in a tone of gentle deference and respect.

Tessa withdrew herself into the farther corner of the seat as she answered:

"I am on my way to London also, Sir Victor."

"But where is your father, Miss Holm?" asked the young baronet. "How happened it that Squire Todhethy did not send you to the station in a carriage?"

"I have run away from the Grange," said Tessa, mournfully.

"I—I don't understand—"

"I will explain," said Tessa, wearily, nestling among the warm blankets and drooping her face from the cutting wind. "After you left me at the Grange gates yesterday, Sir Victor, Squire Todhethy made me a proposal of marriage. I refused him. As we went into the house and into my father's presence his manner was insulting. I treated my father to take me away from the Grange, but he refused. He said I should be forced to marry his friend. Then I avowed my intention of going back to my friends in London, and my father looked me up in my own rooms."

"Made you a prisoner?"

"Yes. I escaped about midnight, only with the friendly aid of the housekeeper. The morning train leaves Wimborn Minster at an hour earlier than my father rises. I shall not be missed until the breakfast hour—nine o'clock—and I shall be safe in London before my father can reach Wimborn Minster and telegraph to have me stopped."

"You have done the best thing possible to you, perhaps," said Sir Victor. "I do not see that any other course was open to you. When your own father conspires with his boon companion against your happiness, and assigns you to that companion as if you were some senseless object, it is time that you took your affairs into your own hands. Pardon me, Miss Holm, but I distrust your father."

"And I also," said Tessa, shuddering. "I am afraid of him, Sir Victor. He does not love me, but, instead, I think he hates me. I have seen a look in his eyes that could have sprang from nothing but hatred."

"You must be mistaken, Miss Holm," said the young baronet, in surprise. "It is against nature for a man to hate his daughter."

"But my father is a stranger to me," said Tessa. "He has a strangely perverted nature, which I can

scarcely comprehend. He hated my mother, and I remind him of her. Therefore he hates me. I cannot tell you the details of my parents' unhappy marriage, but their misery falls upon me."

"You must not go back to such a father," cried Sir Victor, warmly. "He is certainly unfitted to have the guardianship of his daughter. I will see you safely to your friends, and urge them to place you in some secure refuge where he will not be able to find you. Then your guardian and I will proceed to investigate his claims and his history. If he is not worthy to be your guardian, and we can prove his unfitness for the post, the courts will appoint any one whom you may choose in his stead."

"I should choose Reuben Dennis."

"I will interest my friends, so that if influence be needed to effect your rescue it shall be forthcoming. Lord and Lady Thornhurst have generous hearts, and they could not fail to love you. They have been stopping in their town house since a day or two after Christmas, and I shall call on them during my stay in town. My business is to visit an old college friend who is ill in lodgings in London."

"And you have hurried through all this storm at his summons?" said Tessa. "You have a good heart, Sir Victor."

The young baronet was tempted to offer her that heart and his hand with it on the spot, but a timely remembrance that she was helpless and dependent upon him restrained the words as they came to his lips. He could not take advantage of her gratitude and helplessness to urge upon her his suit. But it required all the chivalry of his grand nature to prevent him from gathering her to his heart and shielding her thus from the storm. He contented himself with packing the blankets about her and arranging a pillow for her head.

He was thinking of her with all the ardour of a young lover when she fell asleep. She was utterly exhausted, and slept so profoundly and with such stillness, that one might have thought her dead.

"She is worn out," murmured Sir Victor. "What must she not have suffered to have attempted flight on a night like this!"

He bent over her, with a rush of tender emotion, as if to kiss her pure brow, but withdrew himself quickly, murmuring:

"She shall be as sacred to me as a sister while she lies so helpless. But on the journey to London I will ask her to be my wife. If she will but give me the right, I will defend her from a thousand foes!"

He drove on, with happy musings, over the wild, rough road. Their progress was necessarily slow, the horse being well nigh exhausted, and it was over two hours later before the vehicle entered the streets of Wimbourn Minster.

Tessa awakened as they jolted over the pavements. Sir Victor drove to the station, which was opened, warmed, and lighted, and sending his horse in charge of a porter to an inn, conducted Tessa to a waiting-room.

(To be continued.)

PRINCE PIERRE BONAPARTE.—The marriage of Prince Pierre Bonaparte with Mdlle. Riffieu was recently celebrated at the French Legation at Brussels. The marriage, says the *Independence Belge*, was but the consecration of a union contracted years ago before the civil officer of a small town in Belgian Luxembourg named Lacuisine. That union, from which had issued two children, had been disapproved by the Emperor, who, by virtue of the laws of the Empire, declared the ceremony null and void. The Empire having fallen, the prince desired to legitimize his children, therefore the parties presented themselves before the French Minister, who, in reply to a question from the prince, said that they were acting strictly according to law. The marriage contract was read and duly signed, after which the parties were declared to be regularly married.

THE ELCHO SHIELD.—The Elcho Challenge Shield, won this year by English marksmen, has been formally, and in the presence of a large assemblage of persons, entrusted to the custody of the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of London. The ceremony took place in the Guildhall, which was thronged with volunteers, the Honourable Artillery Company taking a prominent part in the proceedings. The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs attended in state, and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts and many of the leading civic functionaries were on the platform. Mr. Wells, M.P., the captain of the team, explained to the Lord Mayor the conditions of the contest and the additional honour which was conferred on the winners by having the shield hung in the Guildhall. The Lord Mayor in accepting the trust said he did so with great pleasure, and the City of London was proud of the trophy. The winners were, at his lordship's request, presented to the Lord Mayor, and after cheers for his Lordship and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts had been given, the shield was hung over the principal entrance, and the ceremony was concluded.

The Honourable Artillery Company afterwards entertained the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs and the "English Eight" at a banquet at the Armoury House, Finsbury Square, which was one of the most successful gatherings ever held at the ancient headquarters. Captain Field presided. The shield cost 1,000*l.* It was presented ten years ago by Lord Elcho for annual competition by picked teams of English, Scotch, and Irish marksmen, each team made up of eight men. The shield was won the year before last by the Scottish team, and was carried in triumph through the streets of Edinburgh, and was during those twelve months hung up in a post of honour in the Parliament House.

MILLY'S LOVERS.

Was there ever such an awkward predicament? The pretty face glancing at itself in the mirror opposite drew down the corners of the rosy mouth, and tried to look sorry; but the imp of mischief that lurked in the dimple in her chin gained the day, and Milly tossed the letter on the sofa and laughed wickedly.

"Millicent!" exclaimed Miss Deborah de Kaye, frowning darkly over her gold-rimmed spectacles at the sound. "Such levity is most unseemly!"

Unseemly! What would have become of Aunt Deborah had she but known the dreadful enormity of the whole matter? For Milly de Kaye, just eighteen years old, an orphan, an heiress, and pretty enough to set any man distracted at her vagaries, was—I shudder to say it—was, at that very moment, engaged to three different men!

There isn't a shadow of an excuse to offer for her, except that she was the most mischievous kitten I ever knew, and she had a way of opening her soft gray eyes, and looking innocently up at the unlucky man with whom she was flirting, which, in some marvellous manner, invariably bewitched him into making a goose of himself.

She had been paying visits in Brighton and London, and—dear me!—it would take a month to relate all the naughtiness she had been guilty of. And the present cause of the mirth which shocked Aunt Deborah was nothing less than a letter from one of the unfortunates, who considered himself engaged to Milly, beseeching her guardian's sanction to that arrangement.

Milly's real guardian was Mr. Somers, a jolly old gentleman, formerly her father's partner. He had retired from practice, and lived very handsomely in Brighton. But when she left school Milly found herself claimed by her father's sisters, two maiden ladies, who resided in one of the loveliest of rural spots, where they quite queened it over the rest of the inhabitants thereof by virtue of their ancient name and blue blood.

They were very elegant old ladies—such models of propriety that Milly shocked them every hour in the day, to her intense glee. And this letter which caused such a sensation had been forwarded by Mr. Somers to Aunt Deborah—a bit of folly for which Milly secretly resolved to read him a lecture.

"A most properly expressed letter," said Miss Deborah, picking it up and smoothing out the creases that Milly had made. "Richard de Brun; a very good name, Milly—dates back to the Conquest, I think."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Milly, snucily. "Mr. De Brun looks very much like an animated fossil; I'll ask him how he felt when he landed at Hastings."

Aunt Deborah gasped; the superiority of long descent was one of her articles of belief, and Milly's nineteenth-century irreverence filled her with pious horror.

"It's perfectly ridiculous," pursued Milly. "Why, Aunt Deborah, he's old enough to be my grandfather, very nearly."

"Didn't you accept him when he proposed to you?" asked Miss de Kaye, severely.

"Why—no!" hesitated Milly, the dimples beginning to show themselves again. "He asked me if I would like to live in Brighton, and I said, 'Yes, Brighton air agreed with me'; then he wished to know how I liked his house (it was at a grand party that he gave, and we were in the picture gallery, at the time), and I told him it would suit me exactly, if there were only a conservatory added; and he said he would consult an architect. Then Clarke Egglethorpe came after me to wait, and—and—that's all—every bit!"

But secretly Miss Milly was chuckling over the tableau of fat Mr. De Brun's panting efforts to rise from his knees when he heard Egglethorpe's footsteps; and she did not think it necessary to speak of the coquetish glances that had made such wild work with the tough old bachelor's worldly-wise heart.

"Millicent, this is perfectly—" began Miss Deborah.

But she got no farther in that sentence, for the door

opened, and into the room walked Aunt Barbara. Now Aunt Barbara was a shade less strict in her ideas of propriety than her sister, which may be accounted for by her being three years her junior, and having once had a love affair which ended unhappily but had invested her with a sort of sad dignity ever since, therefore in "matters of the heart," as she termed such affairs, Aunt Barbara felt herself to be quite *au fait*.

"Milly," said Miss Barbara, with a benign glance that somehow gave Milly a preparatory shiver, "James has just brought up the noon mail, and here's a letter which, being addressed to the Misses de Kaye, I have opened. It's a very important letter, my dear," she continued, smiling blandly, "from Mr. Roger Winthrop, asking our consent to his paying his addresses to you. Sister Deborah, please read it."

Milly betook herself to the sofa-pillow, which she plucked viciously to keep from another display of levity.

After Aunt Deborah had read the note over twice she handed it to the delinquent, who commented upon it with her usual freedom aloud.

"He 'hopes his name and position may not be unacceptable;—nonsense! what have they to do with the matter?—' thinks your niece's affectionate are engaged in the affair;—much he knows about them!—' and will hope to receive a favourable answer in person this week.' Heavens!"

Milly looked perfectly aghast at the suggestion.

"I wish you would be less profane!" sighed Aunt Deborah. "Barbara, I don't know what to make of Milly. I too have received a proposal for her—from Mr. Richard de Brun; you have heard of the family, my dear—their ancestors came over with the Conqueror—and I begin to think Milly must have behaved very badly while away from our guidance. I fear she has been trifling."

"With the deepest and purest emotions of the human heart!" ejaculated Aunt Barbara, solemnly. "Alas! poor old ladies."

Milly smiled involuntarily, and pushed farther down into her pocket a long letter from Clarke Egglethorpe, informing her that he meditated coming to Westley to announce their "engagement."

"To which of these two letters do you wish me to return an affirmative answer?" demanded Aunt Deborah, having given Milly what she thought a proper pause for reflection.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Milly, in an aggravatingly helpless voice, with a meek droop of her gray eyes. "Don't answer them, Aunt Deborah—let them come; Westley is a very pretty place, and I shouldn't want to decide such a serious matter before you and Aunt Barbara had seen the gentlemen." A faint glimmer of satisfaction dawned upon Miss Deborah's grim countenance at this diplomatic remark, and Aunt Barbara interposed with another piece of news.

"I also had a note from Dora Larcum, saying that she is coming down from London, and intends to pay us a short visit."

"Dora!" cried Milly, in a tone that spoke volumes. If there was an individual whom she detested, it was her cousin Dora.

"And a telegram from Noel Sefton. The carriage will have to go for them both this afternoon. I do wish Noel had given us a little more notice."

"Don't abuse the absent, Aunt Barbara," said a laughing voice behind her, and Milly sprang up with a radiant face to greet the delinquent, who lounged half inside the low window.

"Oh, Cousin Noel! I'm so glad you have come."

To ordinary mortals the cordiality of her welcome would have carried proof of her sincerity; but Noel Sefton had known Milly, and Milly's "ways," since the tender age of six, when she used to practise coquetry upon him in a mild form, therefore he gave her a droll, teasing look from a pair of dark blue eyes, and an incredulous "Honour bright, Milly?" in the calmest of tones, which inspired her with a longing to box his ears.

Aunt Deborah gave him her cheek to kiss, and thawed visibly, for Noel was her favourite nephew; the choicest wines and the finest fruit were always produced for Mr. Sefton, who, invariably, with all his love of teasing, kept within the boundary of deference to her, which Aunt Deborah always exacted.

"You needn't send the carriage," said Noel, depositing himself in his graceful, lazy way on a corner of Milly's sofa. "Dora is at present riding up from the station. I preferred walking to the infliction!" he added, wickedly, for Milly's edification.

"Is she as agreeable as ever?" retorted Milly, provokingly aloud.

"I think she has a mission now," said he, plaintively; "I believe I heard her say so as I fell asleep. Really it was my only defence. I was obliged to restore exhausted nature after two hours of uninterrupted Dora."

Aunt Deborah opened her lips to reprove him, but



[DORA LARCOM'S DISGUST.]

the sound of carriage-wheels at the door interrupted her, and both old ladies went out to receive the guest.

"Oh, Noel!" said Milly, in a voice of comic despair, and forgetting her pique in her anxiety to unfold part of her dilemma (she wouldn't have told him all of it for the world), "I am in such a scrape."

"Another?" he asked, resignedly.

"So horrid! Do you know, Mr. Somers actually sent the letter to Aunt Deborah, and, Noel, he's coming here to Westbury."

"Deluded mortal! Who's coming, Milly?"

"Mr. De Brun—Richard; the fat old bachelor, who lives in Sussex Square."

Noel went off into a shout of laughter; Milly's face was irresistible.

"Aunt Deborah thinks I've made a grand conquest, and enlarges about his Norman descent! I don't know what I shall do! Then, of all things, Dora! Noel, dear," she said, with the softest blush, and side-glance of her eyes, "you'll have to take care of me; I never was in such a plight in my life."

Milly administered her sugar-plum adroitly, just as she heard Aunt Deborah's foot on the threshold; and Noel's reply, if he meant to make one, was silenced by Dora's entrance.

Dora Larcom, the third of this party of cousins, was several years Milly's senior, and would have been called a very handsome woman had it not been for sundry eccentricities in dress that produced a curious effect upon the beholder.

She had regular, well-shaped features, and a fine complexion; but her pretty, light-brown hair was drawn down close behind her ears, and fastened in a val at the back of her head. Milly read "woman's effrage" plainly inscribed on that coiffure, and with secret satisfaction saw Noel's eyes glance at her own graceful, chestnut braids.

Milly always maintained a species of armed neutrality with Miss Larcom upon the rare occasions

when they met. She had never quite forgotten a childish scrape which occurred one summer when Dora and she were left under Aunt Deborah's guardianship, and had nearly driven the old lady crazy by their different methods of aggravations.

Upon one occasion Milly (being previously instigated to the wickedness by a sly hint from Dora) stole a plate of baked apples from Aunt Deborah's pantry, and secreted them upon the garret stairs for their private deglutition; but the poor little culprit never enjoyed that repast, for Dora, being seized with spite because Milly was allowed to go out and drive instead of herself, basely turned queen's evidence, and conducted Aunt Deborah to the spot where the stolen treasure was hidden.

Milly bore the punishment that followed in a purely stoical manner, but she never forgot the meanness of the informer; and she had many an opportunity of hitting Dora hard raps now-a-days in sore places, and I must, as a truthful historian, confess that she seldom omitted to improve them.

"Milly, dear; so glad to see you! How stout you have grown—quite rustic and rosy, isn't she, Cousin Noel?" said Dora, in a thin, rasping voice, that contrasted unpleasantly with Milly's soft intonations.

"Noel mistook me for a milkmaid," retorted Milly, picking up the gauntlet with dancing eyes. "Let me take your hat, Dora. Is this the last Brighton fashion for arranging hair?—so graceful and becoming!"

The little witch perched her head on one side with malicious gravity of contemplation.

But Dora ignored the remark with a lofty air, that added to Noel's enjoyment, and directed her conversation chiefly to the aunts, while Milly whispered naughty comments to Noel on the sofa until presently her attention was caught by Dora's saying, carelessly:

"What became of Mr. Winthrop after you left me, Cousin Noel? Did he go on to Brighton?"

"He went to the hotel here," said Noel, shooting a glance at Milly.

Aunt Deborah gave a significant cough, and asked her nephew if he had invited his friend to dine.

Milly grew hot at the bare suggestion. What would become of her if Roger Winthrop confided his hopes to Noel? Somehow she did not like to imagine stern reproof in those deep, blue eyes.

But Noel did not seem to think Mr. Winthrop's visit of much importance, for he answered, carelessly, that Roger said he would call, then amused himself by slyly ruffling up Dora's oddities, and enjoying the aunts' bewilderment at her new-fangled theories.

Milly slipped away from them all before long, and when once locked in her room she sat down to think, and found her ideas in a dreadfully tangled state. Whoever could have supposed that these absurd men would have selected the same week to pounce upon her? It had been great fun to think that her three separate strings were in Brighton and London, and she had managed to postpone the evil day with great adroitness, but she had not bargained for this general settlement.

Then Noel—pahaw!—she could coax him into helping her out of any trouble; but, somehow, with all his cool, careless ways, his ideas about women were fastidious and peculiar, and she did not believe he would approve of her doings.

It made Milly downright angry to feel such a misgiving about telling him the whole state of affairs, and she frowned until her pretty, fair brow became a droll imitation of Aunt Deborah's last efforts in that line. She read over Clarke Egglethorpe's letter, and it made her feel more guilty than ever, for there was a ring of real passionate warmth in it. Well! She couldn't marry all of them.

Her wits generally brightened in an emergency, and now, by way of assisting them, she would take a ride on horseback with Noel. So she arrayed herself in her blue habit, tied the hat with its tiny blue veil around it, and marched down, looking more wicked and prettier than ever, and challenged her cousin to a race, nor deigned to apologize to Dora for carrying him off.

They had a merry ride; Milly was determined to enjoy present pleasure, at all events, and Noel left off teasing, and did not even allude to Roger Winthrop, for which forbearance she was unspeakably thankful.

Coming back, down through the shady avenue which led to the door, Milly had her race, and Noel's horse was sufficiently matched in speed with hers to make it exciting. They came in very close together, Milly not more than two lengths ahead, her bright face glowing with fun and triumph, her scarlet lips parted with their archest smile, as she turned her head over her shoulder to see Noel's placidly amused face.

"Bless my soul!" said a wheezing, asthmatic voice. "Miss Milly, it's very unsafe for you to ride so fast. Wait! Let me help you off."

Milly's smile deepened into something with a soupçon of malice in it as she saw Mr. De Brun's corpulent person coming slowly down the steps. Roger Winthrop's tall, angular figure appeared at his elbow; but with a nod and careless "Good evening" to both her suitors, Milly slipped off her saddle, taking Noel's firm, steady hand in her descent. How he managed to be beside her before them, or how Milly contrived to let him know that she would be assisted by no one but himself, remains a problem.

Tea was served in due time, and Miss Deborah presided behind the urn, urbane and dignified, with Mr. De Brun at her right hand and Roger Winthrop at her left.

Milly's deportment, under the scrutiny of her pair of lovers, was a study—cool, careless, and merry all at once, with the innocent-looking, wide-opened gray eyes that I have before alluded to, and the same bewitching smiles, except that she capriciously bestowed all the latter upon her cousin Noel, and kept the carelessness for others.

Dora Larcom devoted herself to a ponderous flirtation—no other adjective describes it—with Roger Winthrop, which lasted most of the evening.

But Milly did not escape to her room as successfully as she hoped to do, for, as she was descending volubly upon the merits of Offenbach versus Mendelssohn, merely to tease Dora, Mr. Winthrop contrived to get behind her chair, and said, in solemn sotto voce:

"Miss Milly, I hope my letter was received with approbation by your aunts. Will you appoint an hour at which I may see you in the morning? I ought to have a few privileges now, you know."

Milly's cheeks were in a flame. If Roger had been gifted with a little mother-wit he would not have mistaken that red flag of mutiny for maidenly confusion.

"I don't know what you mean by 'now,'" said she, wickedly unconscious. "Your privilege as a

guest certainly permit you to call upon me when I'm disengaged."

He looked so bewildered, awkward, and helpless, that she became suddenly good natured, and added, in a hasty whisper, as Dora drew near them:

"Come over at ten to-morrow."

Mr. Winthrop settled his collar, and ran his hand through his thin, sandy whiskers complacently as he thought:

"I don't think she has quite the dignity necessary to fill the position of Mrs. Roger Winthrop, Jun.; but the property is so large, by Jove! and the girl's very pretty."

Mr. De Bruin and Aunt Deborah had evidently been holding cabinet counsel, and Milly became suddenly blind, and would not see her aunt's uplifted finger.

So the fat bachelor was obliged to make his adieu to his lady love in public, but she considerably asked him to breakfast, which made him depart beaming with satisfaction.

"How, you do flirt with that mountain, Milly," whispered Noel as he lit her candle for her at the foot of the stairs. "Why don't you put him out of his misery at once?"

"Misery!" retorted she. "Rather a healthy specimen! How do you know what I may do? His house is lovely, and—oh, Noel! I'll have you at all my dinner parties, and I'll give such gorgeous ones!"

And the mischievous face nodded good night over the banisters.

I am afraid that it was not an invocation to his patron saint which Mr. Sefton muttered in the depths of his moustache while walking off to bed.

Breakfast was half over next morning when Milly came down, looking like a rose-bud. I don't know how she managed it, for she had cried her pretty eyes red the night before, because Dora had seen fit to visit her before retiring, and had entertained her with a venomous bit of gossip about Noel, consisting of an artful combination of hints as to his being "fast," and the prevailing rumour of his engagement to Flora Delaney, a girl about whom Milly had been secretly troubled for some time.

But she did not let Dora have the bliss of knowing that her story annoyed her—not she; and Miss Larcum retired at length, feeling rather sore at the retaliating raps which Milly had administered.

There were two letters on Milly's plate, one in Mr. Somers's somewhat scratchy, business-like hand, and the other with a London post-mark, and an intricate monogram in scarlet and gold.

Milly read both in silence, and neither appeared to give her much satisfaction, for her fresh young brow unconsciously assumed Aunt Deborah's form, and Noel saw it.

Looking up, she caught his eye, and awoke to the conversation going on round her. It was conducted chiefly by the gentlemen, and was nothing less than the state of the money market—gold and stocks—all Greek to Milly.

As she watched the earnestness with which Mr. De Bruin and Noel discussed Mammon an idea flashed into Milly's busy brain—an idea, naughty and wicked in the extreme, and only to be carried out by a series of awful fibs; but it opened a possible door of escape from "these dreadful men" as she mentally styled them, and the temptation was great.

The next half-hour was dawdled away over the piano with Noel, then Dora announced that she saw Mr. Winthrop approaching the house.

Milly seized her garden-hat and scissors.

"Aunt Deborah," said she, "the vases in the library want fresh flowers, and I think I'll gather them before the sun gets any higher. Thank you, Mr. De Bruin; I won't trouble you to go, but perhaps you'll find me in the summer-house presently."

For Milly thought that she might find an interception agreeable in the coming interview, and provided for its occurrence like a prudent general.

Roger's greeting was elaborate in its stateliness, and, as he gazed patronizingly down upon her, she felt timid and longed to have it over. Bah! how could she ever have allowed him to go so far? But the would give him his chance with the others. So, at last, looking coquettishly up at him (the girl was in a desperate fright, but she could not help her natural proclivities), she plunged into the subject with a droll imitation of his own pomposity.

"Mr. Winthrop, I have something very serious to say to you. I think the understanding which existed between us must be broken."

"Miss De Kaye! Our engagement?"

The astonished Roger gasped for breath.

"It never was an engagement," cried Milly, her natural impetuosity getting uppermost suddenly, "I said 'if I did not change my mind, and I left you equally free. But that's nothing to do with it; I want you to release me from my promise.'"

"But it was such a sensible arrangement, and—I love you devotedly, Milly," said Roger.

Milly smiled involuntarily; the love was evidently an after-thought.

"Thank you," said she, demurely. "But then matters are altered, I find. I am not an heiress any more."

"Not an heiress any more?" ejaculated Roger, actually guilty of the rudeness of repeating her words, but with a rising inflection of voice that afforded Milly the most gleeful satisfaction.

"No," said she, soberly. "I had a letter from my guardian, Mr. Somers, this very morning. I don't quite understand him; it's all about stocks and banks that he had confidence in" (how the slandered guardian would have boxed her ears if he could have heard this mendacious statement), "but that's the sum total; there is only a little saved, and I'm not an heiress any more, and shall have to live with Aunt Deborah. Do you think I should make a good governess?"

"Heavens! What a lucky escape for me," thought Roger. Then he spoke aloud, more pompously than ever: "A governess! My dear Miss De Kaye, your relations will not allow that, of course. Let me hope that it is not as bad as you fear; Mr. Somers has been a most careless guardian, I should imagine. I must thank you for your frankness and honesty; situated as I am, I cannot offer you affluence, and you are most sensible in desiring that our connection should cease."

"Good morning," she said, giving him the tips of her rosy fingers, and very nearly giving audible expression to the indignation she felt.

But she had to endure another of his set speeches, which she took mental notes of, to entertain Noel with, and, finally, raising his hat half an inch above his head, Mr. Winthrop turned on his heel and left her.

"What a capital idea!" thought Milly as she walked blithely on to the summer-house, picking roses as she went along. "I never imagined that I could frighten him off so easily, yet, after all, one likes to be loved for one's own—Mr. Egglethorpe!"

The last two words were uttered aloud, in much surprise, for, lounging against the pillar of the summer-house, stood the handsome figure of Clarke Egglethorpe.

"I was on my way to the house," he said, taking her hand. "Didn't you get my note? Why, Milly, I thought you would be glad to see me?"

He had beautiful, great brown eyes, and they grew sad as he glanced at her averted face, and his tone of disappointment made her feel guilty again.

"I never ought to have allowed you to come," she said, hurriedly. "You must not think of me any more, except as a friend." Then she sat down and told him the same story she had just related to Roger.

I have said he was a handsome man. I must add that he was dangerously unprincipled, and, moreover, was as much in love with Milly as he ever could be with any woman; but his gambling debts were large, and he would probably never have indulged in more than a passing flirtation with her had he not supposed her fortune would be an ample one. But he had sufficient feeling enlisted in the matter to do high tragedy well, and Milly was almost deceived into thinking her test a cruel one, until she found that, with all his protestations, he did not once renew his proposal of marriage.

Her heart turned sick within her bosom, and she wondered if everybody loved her for her money; while Egglethorpe declared he could never be happy again, and parted from her, stormily enough, actually leaving a hot tear upon her hand. It nearly upset her, for Milly had a loving, tender heart, underneath her diablerie, and she sat still when Egglethorpe left her, and pulled her roses to pieces, with something very like tears in her eyes.

"Miss Milly," said Mr. De Bruin, interrupting her at last, "I've come to get my answer, as I wrote you I would. Miss Deborah thinks you are not favourably disposed towards me; but I hope—"

"Don't!" said Milly, petulantly. "Aunt Deborah was right, Mr. De Bruin. I've lost all my money, and—there's an end of it."

The poor man gazed at her in blank dismay. "Lost your money?" he echoed. "What can Somers have been about?"

But Milly, being afraid that too close questioning would expose the ruse, only shook her head, and tried to look doleful.

"I don't believe it can be possible," he finally ejaculated, rubbing his bald head until it shone more smoothly than ever. "But, whether it is true or not, that makes no difference; you shall have as handsome a settlement as any woman in England. Say 'Yes'; I don't care if you haven't a shilling, child."

Milly looked up at the fat little man. He was fairly trembling with excitement, his honest face transformed with feeling into something noble; never, as long as she lived, would she make fun of him again. What would become of her? She knew, by the awful

sinking at her heart, that she could not marry him, and of the three he was the only one who loved her for herself.

"I can't, I can't!" she cried, all her mischief gone out of her in this extremity. "I don't really love you; I could not marry you without love; and, oh! you are just as good and kind and true as you can be—a great deal too good for me."

Milly got both his hands in hers, and poured out her words in her own impetuous fashion. He turned very pale; there was no mistaking the girl's sincerity; and the fairest dream of Richard De Bruin's life died out that June morning.

"There," said he, at last, drawing a long sigh. "It's just as Miss Deborah said; there are too many years between us. Milly, would you mind giving me a kiss? I'm almost old enough to be your father."

She was so sorry for him, so racked with a dozen different emotions, that she trembled from head to foot as she let him take the kiss he asked for. She watched him go up towards the avenue gate, then she darted out away down the garden path, till she came to the little ravine, where she flung herself down, so blinded with tears that she never saw the lazy, graceful figure of Noel lounging on the grass.

"Milly," exclaimed a much-amazed voice, and her cousin sat down beside her and regarded her with the utmost perplexity.

"Go away!" cried she, in the extremity of her surprise and pain.

"Indeed I shall not," said he, gravely, drawing her hand into his, in the peculiarly gentle way that belonged to him. "You always tell me your scrapes, Milly; what is it now?"

But the utter impossibility of telling him all her troubles was the drop too much for Milly, and she went off into genuine hysterics and fairly terrified him by her absurd alternations between tears and laughter.

"I've lost all my money!" she gasped, at last, sitting upright, and speaking intelligibly.

"Is that all?"

"All? It was enough to send off two men who swore desperate love to me three days ago."

"How dare they?"

The flash of fire in the blue eyes made Milly shrink. "That fat old bachelor—"

"Is the only honest one of them all," she burst in, her dream of teasing taking possession of her. "He offered to make a very handsome settlement, and said he didn't care if I hadn't a shilling. I do think he's one of the best men that ever lived."

Noel turned white.

"Milly, don't trifle! Are you going to be married?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said she, wickedly. "Do you?"

For a man who prided himself upon his phlegmatic composure Noel Sefton sadly belied his character upon this occasion, for he saw something in the lovely, blushing face that drove him mad on the instant, and he caught the teasing little witch in his arms, and, having kissed her twice in a most impetuous fashion, said:

"Yes, I do know; you are going to marry me, my darling, and I never meant to let any one else have you—never!"

"Then you're a regular Turk!" said she, recovering her breath after this alarming assault. "Dora says you're engaged to Flora Delaney."

"Dora be—haunted!" was the emphatic retort.

"Noel!" she half-whispered, after a long pause during which she clung to him, as if she was afraid he would vanish suddenly. "Noel," she repeated, very penitently, "I told you a fib!"

"My dear child, I've heard you tell a great many! Well?"

"Please," she continued, with such an absurdly innocent face that he laughed outright. "I haven't lost my fortune at all; I was only making believe."

He looked so amazed that Milly found she must tell him the whole story, which she did, with such coaxing annotations that he had not the heart to scold her as she deserved.

As she twined her arms around his neck, and told him how she had always loved him, since she was a wee child, and whispered how handsome he was, with the delicious flattery of love, Dora suddenly appeared in front of them.

"Well?" said Noel, clasping the clinging Milly more tightly, "don't send Miss Delaney a telegram, Dora."

"You can attend to your own despatches," said she, in a rage. "Milly, I am astonished at you. Upon Aunt Deborah's authority, you are engaged to Roger Winthrop."

"So I was," said Milly, saucily, "and to Mr. De Bruin, and how many more, Noel?"

She sent a ringing laugh after Dora as she went off to spread the news.

Aunt Deborah was perfectly delighted, while Aunt

Barbara wept copiously, and told them the story of her unhappy love-affair, for the thirteenth time, and bestowed a ruby bracelet upon Milly to impress it upon her mind.

Clarke Eglethorpe and Roger Winthrop found out how they had been served, when too late, with secret fury, and Mr. Somers did box Milly's ears when she confessed her naughty falsehoods to him, but kissed her afterwards, in high good humour, as Noel was his prime favourite.

Good Mr. De Brun sent Milly a pair of diamond solitaires for the wedding gift, and Noel and she wrote him a joint note of thanks, which gratified the kind old bachelor's feelings immensely.

Dora Larcom is Dora Larcom still—still in pursuit of a husband, or "a mission,"—it matters very little which. D. V.

FACETIE.

OUR NURSES.

Experienced Night Nurse (sternly): "Come, come, sir! you must stop that horrid noise. If you keep wheezing and snoring like that all night, how am I to get to sleep!"—*Punch.*

The *Toronto Globe* says the grindstone is more precious even than the diamond. But that must depend upon the use we put them to. For edging up an axe the grindstone would undoubtedly excel; but for a breastpin the diamond would actually be worth the most.

AFFECTIONATE BROTHER.—"What's the matter, Lulu? Didn't either of those young fellows I saw flirting with you last evening come to the propositional point?" "Yes, Will, both of them did." "Both of them! What are you crying about, then?" "Because I said 'Yes' to the wrong one."

In an article on "Domestic Unhappiness" which we saw in a daily paper the other morning the question was asked, "Why do wives fade?" As there was no answer to the inquiry we suppose the editor threw it out as a conundrum, and will venture to answer: "Because they won't wash!"

A MOMENTOUS QUESTION.

Mabel: "Is the party over, and everybody gone?"

Mamma: "Yes, dear—Hush! Go to sleep!"

Mabel (with an eye to the Sweets next day): "Was it a greedy party, mamma?"—*Punch.*

THE LIGHT OF THE LAW.—Pompey says: "Talk-in' of law, make me think of what de mortal Cato, who lib most a thousand years ago, once said: 'De law is like a groun' glass winder, dat give light enuff to light us poor mortals in de dark passage of life; but it would puzzel de old un-himself to see troo it.'"

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS.

"Whisky is your greatest enemy," said a clergyman to one of his flock.

"But," said Mr. Jones, "doesn't the Bible say that we are to love our enemies?"

"Oh, yes, Jones, but it doesn't say we are to swallow them."

RECIPROCITY OF SENTIMENT.

A bashful young man was escorting a bashful young lady, when she said, entreatingly:

"Jabez, don't tell anybody you beamed me home."

"Don't be afraid," replied he; "I am as much ashamed of it as you are."

COALS AND CANDLES.

The consumption of coal, according to a statement in the *Times*, continues to exceed a million and a quarter tons a month. Suppose the sea were washing away the coast of England at the same rate, in how many years would this island be reduced to a speck of earth? Surely the typical prodigal, who lights his candle at both ends, is an economist compared with Mr. John Bull in regard to their consumption, respectively, of candles and coals.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

(FRAGMENT OVERHEARD THE OTHER DAY.)

"Well, Lachie, how are you?"

"Man, I'm wonderfu' weel, considerin'."

"Considerin'—what?"

"I did last night what I've no dune this thirty year. I gned to bed pairfu'ly sober, and I'm thankfu' to say I got up this mornin' no a bit the waur."—*Punch.*

"SOLD AGAIN."—A farmer named Harvey, whose apples had suffered much from the stealing propensities of boys in the neighbourhood, recently attempted to put a stop to his trouble in an ingenious way. One night as some men were passing his farm they heard the report of a gun, and ran to the place whence the sound proceeded, and there found Harvey standing over a boy, who lay moaning, and said he had been shot, refusing to tell his name. The farmer ordered the men to leave, telling them he intended to shoot any other person he might find

stealing his apples. So the neighbours were terrified, and the boys refrained from robbing the orchard thereafter. The joke consisted in the fact that no one had been shot at all, the boy being in collusion with the man, and merely pretending that he had been wounded.

THE BIGGEST OF BULLS.—An agitation, newly sprung up in the Land of Leeks, has been described as "Wales for the Welsh." What it demands, however, is the Welsh language for Wales—in courts of law among a Welsh-speaking people. Taffy might be a pattern to Paddy. Whilst crying "Ireland for the Irish!" Paddy should also cry "Irish for Ireland!" What a bull to bellow in the English language for recognition of Irish nationality!—*Punch.*

AN ADVOCATE FOR HOME RULE.

MR. PUNCH.—The question of Home Rule being now before the public, I beg leave to say that I for one intend to rule my home exactly as I choose, and as I always have done. It saves a world of trouble, and I recommend your lady readers all to do the same as I do. I likewise beg to say that I care nothing about politics, but my husband knows quite well that, if I had a vote, I would always take good care to make him vote as I did. So I remain, sir, yours, and not his, to command,

MATILDA GRAYMARE, *née* PRANCE.

No. 1, Teaser Terrace, Tuesday.

—*Punch.*

AN ANIMATED STATUE.—A Paisley man, visiting Glasgow, was being shown the lions of the town, and among other things admired the statue of Sir John Moore, which is an erect figure. He brought another Paisley man soon afterwards to see the statue, but, not being topographically posted, arrived at the statue of James Watt, which is in a sitting attitude. Feeling somewhat puzzled as to the identity of what was before him with what he recollected to have seen, he at length disposed of the difficulty by exclaiming: "Odd, man, he's sat down since I saw him last."

OPINIONS DIFFER.

A market-girl sold a gentleman a fine fat goose, warranting it to be young. It turned out, when roasted, to be unmanageably tough. The next day the gentleman said to the market-girl:

"That goose you sold me for a young one was very old."

"Certainly not," said the girl; "don't you call me young?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am but nineteen, and I heard mother say often that that goose was six weeks younger than me."

INVOLUNTARY IMPRISONMENT.

A stranger one day passing through a certain street was seized by a touter at a clothing shop, who, without ceremony, pulled him into the shop, and began puffing up his fine ready-made clothing. Being old and infirm, he made little resistance, but asked the man if he was master of the place.

"No, sir," said the touter, "but I will bring him immediately."

The man returned with his master, to whom the stranger put the same question:

"Are you master of this shop, sir?"

"Yes, sir, what can I do for you?"

"Only," he replied, "just hold your man a minute, while I go out."

SNOB'S MILITARY SELECTION.

The Army Reorganization scheme includes a general system of reporting. Each officer, from the colonel downwards, is to report the character, conduct, and acquisitions of his next subordinate comrade. If this regulation be retained, the commander-in-chief will soon be surrounded with a staff of reporters. Will their pay be an extra penny a-line? Probably not. Though reporters, they will not be gentlemen of the press. They will not be gentlemen at all. Officers will cease to be gentlemen. They will be officers and Jesuits, instead of being officers and gentlemen; for what gentleman, if the base office of reporting on another, in the manner prescribed by the new Warrant, is to be imposed upon him, will ever enter the army?—*Punch.*

ANCESTRAL WISDOM.

Once upon a time there lived a certain Peter Van Schrenbendyke, who had cleared his own farm, guarded it carefully from the attacks of Indians, and willed it to his son Jacob. The farm was transmitted in regular order from father to son, and at last became the property of Heinrich Van Schrenbendyke, a good-natured, stolid Teuton, whose son Johannes, a bright and lively youth of sixteen years, was told to saddle the horse and ride to the mill with a grist, and hurry back.

The grist was on such occasions placed in one end of a bag, and a large stone in the other end to balance it. Johannes, having thrown the sack across the horse's back and got the grist evenly

divided, had no need of the stone to balance it. He ran to his father, and cried:

"Oh, father, come and see; we don't need the stone any more."

The old man calmly surveyed the scene, and, with a severely reproachful look, said:

"Johannes, your fadder, your grandfadder, and your great-grandfadder all went to de mill with de stone in one end of de bag, and de grist in de odder. Und now you, a mere boy, sets yourself to know more as dey do. You put de stone in de bag, and never more let me see such smartness like dat."

"NO FEES."

We learn, by advertisement, that "the management" of one of our theatres, at which a drama of Shakespeare's has been produced, "being overwhelmed with letters suggesting different Shakespearean plays for performance, ballot-boxes have been placed in all parts of the theatre, in which those honouring the *Tempest* with their presence are requested to slip the name of the play which they prefer. The state of the poll will be published every week."

May we suggest to "the management" of all those theatres where fees are still permitted—fees for booking seats, fees for showing visitors to those seats, fees for playbills, fees for the care of cloaks and bonnets, fees for the custody of coats and hats, etc., that they should put up boxes, in which visitors might deposit their opinion, in writing, of this intolerable system of levying vexatious fines? The "state of the poll," if the "managements" had the courage to publish it, would probably induce all to do what some of their body have already done—abolish fees for ever.—*Punch.*

TID-BITS.

Little Willie C—— is pretty bright for his years, which number but six or seven, and now and then occasions a hearty laugh among his hearers by some quaint or funny speech. An older brother of his was one day inveighing against the weaker sex in terms of considerable bitterness, and finally ended by saying that all women were fiends.

"Tut, tut, Henry," cried a grown-up sister, "you seem to forget that your sister is a woman."

"Oh," was the half-apologetic response, "but, you know, you're different."

"Cause she's our sister," broke in Master Will, "I spose she'd be a fiend to some other girl's brother."

Maybe she would.

Another time he was riding out with his sister and mother, when they met some colts in the road who were burdened with a sort of yoke, having a long stick in front which nearly touched the ground fastened about their necks.

"I wonder what those crnel-looking things are for," said one of the ladies to the other.

"I know," broke in Will, before either could answer.

"Well, what?"

"So 't when they go to jump over a fence the stick'll catch and break their necks, and that'll cure 'em of jumping."

We should think it might.

OUR NEW MAYORS.

Some choice Mayors were elected on Thursday, the ninth of November.

Almack's Beverley's fancy: Beverley will have balls this winter. Birmingham, staunch to one of its branches of trade, has selected a Sadler. Bristol and Portsmouth are both humble-minded, being satisfied with a Baker. Brighton is a rapidly increasing town, and all the rabbits have long since been scared away, yet it has Burrows. Cambridge again leans on a Reed. Derby no doubt possesses Corporation plate, and Derby's Mayor is Leech-eryo, Derby is both enpped and leechd. Happy Devonport! there it will be May all the year round. Ipswich for the fourth time is strong in Sampson; but Ipswich this year has a rival in Lynn, whose Mayor is all Thew. At Gloucester his worship is a Knight already. Lancaster ought to transfer Blades to Sheffield, but Sheffield seems Moore and Moore content to make no change. Newcastle-under-Lyme, Oswestry, and Norwich are Mayorless, and make shift with two Bayleys and a Chamberlain. Oxford—"J. R. Card, third time"—good Card this, no doubt: his worship and Mr. Cardwell are sure to meet at the Druids' dinner. Our fine old Martyrs are well represented with Latimer at Plymouth and Hooper at Tamworth. Stamford combines Law and justice in the person of its chief magistrate. Tiverton has Wells, Wisbeach and Wolverhampton each a Ford, and Swansea a remarkable natural curiosity in a Glasbrooke.

So far as our observation at present extends, the roll of Mayors for 1871-2 is not graced by a Smith. The oldest town-crier cannot remember such an untoward circumstance ever happening before.—*Punch.*

SURTAXED AND SURCHARGED.

The comparatively Great Untaxed, the tolling millions of this country, who contribute nothing to

wards its expenses but a fractional, if not optional, charge on their tea and sugar, and a fractional and optional charge on their beer and gin, from which burdens they may expect soon to be exonerated by a Government which will want their votes, must, as many of them as have read, have been amused by reading an announcement that the tradesmen and professional men of Bath, at a meeting in the Guildhall, convened on Friday evening, to discuss surcharges on their income-tax returns, unanimously voted the following resolution:

"That this meeting protests against the systematic overcharge of the income-tax on the professional and trading classes of this city, and indignantly repudiates the imputation on their honour and veracity shown by the total disregard of the returns which they have fairly and conscientiously made."

To the great untaxed of income the indignation of income-tax payers at being discredited and being surcharged on their returns cannot but seem laughably unreasonable. Of course they think what simpletons people, subjected to a partial tax, that is to plunder, must be to imagine that they would be believed by their assessors to have made true returns on which to have their iniquitous taxation assessed. As if it were likely that any Government, levying an unfair tax, would not assume that everybody would evade it who possibly could. As if they would give anybody credit for being more honest than themselves. These considerations must hugely tickle the Great Untaxed, many of whom, perhaps, further laugh at the idea, even if they were liable to their fair share of taxation, of being invited themselves to disclose, whilst able to conceal, the particulars whereon it could be calculated. —Punch.

DR. LIVINGSTONE.—At the opening meeting of the Royal Geographical Society the president stated that as yet no reliable information had been obtained as to the whereabouts of Dr. Livingstone. On the recommendation of the Government the Queen, he stated, had granted 300*l.* for Dr. Livingstone's children.

GENEROSITY OF THE SULTAN.—Some months ago, as the Sultan was returning home to Dolma-baghché after sunset from a country drive, his carriage passed the house of a Greek family named Kapari, living in a badly lighted part of Nishan Tash, on the slope leading down from behind the military school at Pancaldi to the valley of Beshiktash, when a couple of the children ran along beside the horses, burning Bengal lights to show the way. This happened on two occasions, and on the Sultan, who was pleased with these marks of attention, causing inquiries to be made, he found that the Kapari family had been sufferers from the great Pera fire, and were not, in consequence, in such easy circumstances as they had formerly been. His Majesty thereupon, with a generosity and spice of romance which form part of his character, took a friendly interest in their fortunes. The father was provided with a pension of 1,000*p.* a month, and a place in the Mint; the eldest boy was taken into the public service; and two daughters were betrothed to two of the palace officers of the Greek religion, Khristo and Toutos Agha. The marriage of the elder with Khristo Agha was celebrated at the palace of Dolma-baghché with great rejoicing, and a sumptuous dinner was given, at which all the imperial sets and other servants and officials and other of the Sultan's aides-de-camp attended. Several members of the press were also present, Khristo having formerly been connected with the administrative department of the *Levant Herald* and other local papers. The marriage of Toutos Agha with the younger daughter will take place shortly. His Majesty has supplied the girls with abundant and handsome marriage trousseaux, and is causing two commodious houses to be built, and suitably furnished, at Nishan Tash for both young couples.

SALE OF THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON'S WINE.—The catalogue is out of 100,000 bottles and 57 butts of the Emperor's wine, the sale of which by auction commenced in the Louvre the other day, and was expected to last a fortnight. The great quantity takes the public by surprise, for it was announced that what with the Prussian occupation, the siege of Paris, and the Commune, the Imperial cellars had been pretty well cleared out. It would seem, however, that the bulk of the wine must have been preserved from all foes. The Emperor, with all his faults, was essentially open-handed and hospitable. The best wines that the world could produce were often laid before his chosen friends and distinguished guests. Much good wine there certainly must be. The immense quantity of claret is the principal thing. There are upwards of 12,000 bottles of a very good growth of claret not well known, called Montrose. Of the most familiar brands—Château Lafite, Château Margaux, Château Larose, Château Latour, Château Leoville, Branne Monton, and Cos d'Estournelle—there is a goodly show. The stock of Burgundy is far less abundant; of the highest

marks, such as Chambertin, Romanée, and Clos Vougeot, there are only a few hundred bottles. The 600 bottles of the best class of Sauterne, Château Yquem, 1847, will be priceless. There are scarcely more than 1,000 bottles of Champagne. The collection of Rhine wine is extremely meagre, with the exception of the very best of all Rhine wines, Johannisberger. Of this rare vintage there are advertised 523 bottles from the Tuileries, 205 from Fontainebleau, and 51 from Compiègne. The intimate friendship between the Emperor and Empress and the Prince and Princess Metternich renders it probable that the Johannisberger is that which never comes into the market, is grown on the top of the mound under the windows of the Schloss Metternich, which everybody sees going down the Rhine, and is called the "Pride of the Cellar." In the list of foreign—that is to say, not French—wines, there is a considerable quantity of old Madeira, which is said to be unmatched. The Port, of which there are about 2,000 bottles, is described as *Porto doré*.

THE MILLER'S NIECE.

THERE it stands, as it stood in the olden days,
On the top of the windy hill,
But the paint is worn from the quaint-peaked
tower,

And its old sweet voice is still.
The giant sails, which used to seem
The wings of a mighty bird,
Are now but shrivelled skeletons,
That for years have never stirred.

But I still recall the bright old days
When the sails flew merrily round,
And the little village beneath the hill
Was filled with the pleasant sound;
And the miller, white from top to toe,
Bustling about his mill;

And pretty Janette, his charming niece—
The wild-flower gem of the hill.
Wild roses clambered the steeper crags,
And blossoms large and small
Starred the sod with a hundred hues,
But Janette was fairest of all;
Pretty Janette, of the dancing eyes,
And pure, bright oval face!

Sancy Janette, of the springing foot,
And the form of fairy grace!
But the vision darkens; for here I find
The miller's weed-grown grave,
Just in the shade of the ruined mill,
Where the tall sails used to wave.
And darker, darker memory grows
Of the ingrate girl, whose part,
In giving all for an ill-starred love,
Broke his old and trusting heart.

Doubtless she too, the pretty Janette,
The saucy Janette of old,
Has passed away, as an ingrate should,
In a land unloved and cold.
Alas! as I turn from the windmill sore,
With a saddened heart and mind,
The sails, like the bones of a skeleton,
Rattle and shake in the wind. N. D. U.

GEMS.

THE more earnestly you exhort your confidant to secrecy the more likely he is to tell.

THE influence of costume is incalculable; dress a boy as a man and he will at once change his own conception of himself.

LOOK always at the bright side of things, as the cheering and invigorating sun does; and remember that content is the mother of good digestion.

WE have but one moment at once, let us improve it. Our moment will soon come when this life will cease—may we so live as to meet it without regret. It is a vain thing for you to thrust your finger in the water, and, pulling it out, look for a hole; it is equally vain to suppose that, however large a space you occupy, the world will miss you when you die.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

STUFFING FOR A TURKEY OR CHICKEN.—Take some bread crumbs and turn on just enough hot water to soften them; put in a piece of butter, not melted, the size of a hen's egg, and a spoonful of pulverized sage, a teaspoonful of ground pepper, and a teaspoonful of salt; there may be some of the bread crumbs that need to be chopped; then mix thoroughly and stuff your turkey.

TO PRESERVE FLOWERS.—A new mode of preserving flowers, fruit, and botanical specimens generally, which we think will be appreciated by those

who wish to preserve specimens gathered by departed friends, or to retain the form of flowers for botanical teaching, consists in simply dipping the flowers into melted paraffin, and withdrawing them quickly, when a thin coat of the paraffin instantly sets and encloses hermetically the plant so treated. In order to be successful, the flowers should be freshly gathered, perfectly dry, and free from dew or moisture of rain. The paraffin should not be hotter than just sufficient to liquefy it; and the flowers should be dipped into it separately, holding them by the stalks, and moving them about in order to get rid of bubbles of air, which are likely to become imprisoned within the corolla of the flowers. Those parts of plants or flowers which are not required to be preserved should be removed with scissors prior to steeping them in the paraffin.

STATISTICS.

TAX ON SERVANTS.—The duty on male servants, fixed by the Budget of 1869 at 15*s.* a head, produced only 101,844*l.* in the financial year 1870-71. In the year 1869-70, the year in which the time of collecting the duty was changed, it produced 244,810*l.*; in 1868-69 the then duty (a guinea or half-a-guinea according to age) produced 233,533*l.* We must go back sixteen years to find the duty on servants producing less than 200,000*l.* It is nearly 100 years since (in 1777) duties on male servants were imposed. From 1785 to 1791 there was a tax on female servants, and from 1785 to 1854 bachelors keeping male servants were charged at a higher rate than other persons.

MISCELLANEOUS.

IT is stated that the Russian women aspire to have a university of their own.

IT is stated that instead of rebuilding his hotel on the Place St. Georges, M. Thiers thinks of buying a mansion in the Champs Elysées.

THE amalgamation of the three southern railways—the Brighton, South-Eastern, and London, Chatham, and Dover—is being talked of.

BY the substitution of coal for coke on the South Western Railway a saving of not less than 30,000*l.* per annum has been effected.

THE PUBLISHER OF "BRADSHAW."—The will of Mr. Henry Blacklock, printer and publisher of Bradshaw's Railway Guide, was proved at Manchester under 140,000*l.* personality.

THE KING EMMAUEL THEATRE.—The new theatre now building in Rome, with the title of the King Emmanuel, will have a glass roof, enabling the manager to give both day and evening performances.

SALE OF THE CHATEAU ARTEAGA.—The Empress Eugénie, says the *Ordre*, has just put up for sale the magnificent chateau of Arteaga, one of the fiefs that her family has possessed in Spain for centuries.

GASLIGHTS IN ROME.—There are now 1,500 more gaslights in the streets of Rome than formerly; but the whole number still falls short of Turin by more than a thousand. Gas-lamps are adopted here and there, before images of the Madonna.

UNIVERSITY BOAT RACE.—The annual Oxford and Cambridge boat-race is spoken of as likely to take place on Saturday, March 23rd, next year. Both universities have already commenced the preliminary practice for the formation of crews.

THE BELGIANS AND THE EXHIBITION.—The Belgians, it is said, are greatly satisfied with the results of the London Exhibition. The thirty-nine pictures which were sold in the Belgian picture gallery brought in together 185,000*fr.*, or, on an average, 4,750*fr.* The highest price attained by one picture was 22,250*fr.*

M. GAMBETTA'S PROSPECTIVE MARRIAGE.—With regard to the rumoured marriage of M. Gambetta with a Mlle. Audoy, daughter of an ex-prefect, it is stated that the nuptials have been unavoidably postponed, owing to the fact that the father-in-law has not yet been blessed with a girl. M. Audoy has three sons, but no daughter.

A CURIOUS BET.—At Newbury, Berks, Sir John Throckmorton made a wager of a thousand guineas that at eight o'clock on a particular evening he would sit down to dinner in a well-woven, well-dyed, well-made suit of clothes, the wool of which formed the fleece on sheep's backs at five o'clock that same morning. Two sheep were shorn, the wool was washed, carded, stubbed, roved, spun, and woven, the cloth was scoured, fulled, tented, raised, sheared, dyed, and dressed, the garments were made, and at a quarter-past six in the evening Sir John sat down to dinner, at the head of his guests, in a complete damson-coloured suit, made, thus winning his wager with one hour and three-quarters to spare.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. B. must send better particulars.

S. B.—We are unacquainted with the individual referred to.

ETHEL must send particulars of her personal appearance and disposition.

EVA.—1. The handwriting is excellent. 2. The other matter will receive due consideration.

JANE M. T. is referred to our standing rule on the subject of manuscripts.

S. S.—The manuscript has been received, and will be perused in due course.

MARY F.—We have at present nothing farther to say on the subject.

S. B.—The tins containing condensed milk can be purchased at the warehouses of most grocers.

ROBALIND.—The handwriting is very good; greater freedom could be obtained by constant practice.

WICKED EYES.—The individual will complete his fortieth year on the day before his birthday in April, 1872.

DOR is recommended to wait a while, and to think of the five years' difference between her age and the age of her friend Mary Ann.

M. F. (Bishop's Stortford).—The parts inquired for cannot be had; the periodical in question was long ago incorporated with *THE LONDON READER*.

SUFFERER.—The usual remedy for the convulsive fits to which some children are subject is the application of gin, vinegar, and water in equal quantities to the head while the body is immersed in a warm bath.

J. S. A.—Our subscribers' matrimonial requests receive such attention as it is in our power to give. If your announcement has not appeared you should write again, and be careful to send precise particulars.

G. S. O.—The proper way would be for the parties to have their wishes embodied in a carefully worded deed of partnership, in which could be inserted any desirable arrangements concerning book-keeping, stock-taking, and other necessary details.

YOUNG GINGER.—The celebrated Daniel O'Connell was born at Cahirciveen in the county of Kerry on the 6th August, 1775, and died at Genoa on his way to Rome on the 15th May, 1847; he therefore attained the age of 71 years and 282 days.

G. E. S.—Your attempt at versification does not promise well. The phraseology is often ungrammatical and sometimes nonsensical. The only faint of poetry adhering to the composition is the tender affection of a mother and sister for a truant boy.

J. W. K.—The diction of your rhymes is not sufficiently chaste and elevated for the sentiment you would have them illustrate, or for the lesson you desire to convey. The first verse is the best, the latter half of the second verse is confused, and the last line of the last verse surely is not an expression of your true meaning.

LITTLE TINY.—The spots in question arise from some constitutional disturbance, and in relation to this the best course to adopt is to obtain medical advice. A properly qualified surgeon will not prescribe unless he has a personal interview with the individual who requires his assistance.

SOI.—1. In a good English grammar, Morrell's for example. 2. Instructions for finding the Dominical or Sunday letter are useless if unaccompanied by a series of letters and figures arranged in a tabulated form. For this form we must refer you to the commencement of your Prayer Book; instructions are given with the form. 3. *THE LONDON READER* has been in existence for nearly nine years. 4. Your poetical contributions are declined with thanks.

LILY LANE.—Although the rhythmical properties of your "Fire-side Musings" are atrocious some of the enthusiastic admirers of your many charms might pronounce them not so bad as they seem. They might also express a regret that you have disappointed expectation because of the lassitude superinduced by the warmth of the fire or by your long-sustained reverie, and would you for provoking a curiosity which you fail to satisfy. They would have been glad to read an expression of the thoughts connected with the wanderers in the tangled wood, and they cannot fail to ask Why—the sigh?

ALICE D.—The best course to adopt is to consider the matter at an end and to feel yourself disengaged. You, however, should not take the initiative in any new courtship, for you are much too young to marry. Should it happen that another suitor presently endeavours to win your heart try to remember at least one thing, that clau-

destine love-making seldom ends happily. Let him (whoever he may be) come a wooing if he will, but let him state his intentions to your parents and your friends. Claudine has more of the fraudulent than secret character attached to it. A girl is not happy unless she can talk to some one about her lover, and, even if on such occasions he is inclined to behave well, the clandestinity may invite treachery, and too late will occur to a disappointed, lovesick lassie the distich

"A secret to no friend betray;

If you can't keep it, how can they?"

Secrets are sometimes necessary but always uncomfortable things. The fewer young ladies possess the more happiness are they likely to enjoy.

MENTAL SUFFERER.—The first inquiry you should make is—in what condition is your physical health? for a torpid liver is not conducive to a very lively state of the intellectual faculties. Proceed, therefore, at once to your physician and hope to derive benefit from his advice. Secondly, exert yourself; try to find out whence the timidity and whence the want of confidence. Possibly you may find that some cruel will-o'-the-wisp is wantonly jerking his lantern before your eyes for the very purpose of misleading you. If it should be that his interests are served either by totally defeating your object or by an endeavour to make its attainment as laborious as possible, the pertinacity with which he will dance his ignis fatuus in your path is almost incredible. But this is just the very reason why you should not be timid. You must take courage, because such trials are often ordered by Heaven in order that it may "find persistent constancy in men." Still try on, inquiringly, industriously, patiently, cheerfully, and hopefully, and in due time you will get out of the quagmire into the right road. A fish out of water simply dies; you must live, for there is work for you to do.

"SOMEBODY'S" HAIR AND EYES.

Hair so golden-brown and soft,
In its abundance falling low,
Now darkly brown where shadow lies
Or golden in the sun's warm glow,
Put back behind the tiny ears
In many a wave of chestnut brown;
Oh, never heard of king or queen
Could boast a richer, brighter crown!

Eyes—ah, never were there eyes
Like those I love! so dark and true—
Like heart of diamond, gleaming bright
Beneath a tiny drop of dew;
Eyes that tell the silent tale
The dear, proud heart would keep concealed;
I bless them for the loving thoughts
They in their depths have oft revealed.

H. A.

Moss Rose, eighteen, pretty, witty, and fond of society. Would like to marry a tall, dark, handsome man.

MARY, twenty-one, tall, dark, and a dressmaker, would like to marry a young man about twenty-three; he must be a teetotaler and a Roman Catholic.

BLACK-EYED SUSAN, twenty-one, and has money. Would like a partner for life fond of music, fond of children, fair, and tall.

FORGET-ME-NOT, twenty-one, rather fair, with curly hair and blue eyes. Respondent must be a dark gentleman, good tempered, and have a good income.

FIORY, twenty-three, medium height, light brown hair and eyes. Wishes to correspond with a seafaring gentleman who would make a loving husband.

LILY, seventeen, tall, fair, blue eyes, and would make a loving wife. Respondent must be tall, dark, and fond of home.

WICKED EYES, nineteen, good looking, accomplished, and has expectations. Would like to marry a tall, dark gentleman.

LOVING NELLIE, twenty-eight, medium height, very affectionate, and domesticated. Respondent must be very steady, fond of home, and about thirty.

STELLA, nineteen, 5ft. 11in., fair, light hair, gray eyes, and loving. Respondent must be tall, dark, well educated, and in a good position.

J. S. A., twenty-six, medium height, light complexion, in good circumstances, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty, and able to make herself as useful in the kitchen as in the drawing-room.

FLORA, nineteen, tall, fair, gray eyes, loving, and has expectations. Respondent must be tall, dark, nice looking, and in receipt of a moderate income; a tradesman preferred.

LOKATHA, twenty-three, tall, slender, dark hair, gray eyes, of genteel appearance, reserved disposition, very loving, and fond of home. Respondent should be tall, noble looking, and in a good position.

WILD ROSE, eighteen, a blonde, ladylike, affectionate, good looking, and fond of music. Would like to marry a young gentleman about her own age, who is dark and well educated.

J. B. L., twenty-two, 5ft. 8in., dark curly hair, good teeth, good looking, and cheerful. Respondent should be tall, fair, educated, and not object to leave England; a Cornish girl preferred.

YOKOHAMA, twenty-one, a steady and sober young printer, being about to proceed to Japan, wishes to take with him as his wife one of the fair readers of the *LONDON READER* a little younger than himself.

ADA, twenty-one, tall, fair, blue eyes, golden hair, nice looking, and loving. Respondent must be tall, dark, have black eyes, and be fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

ANOLA, nineteen, good tempered, dark, very beautiful, with black ringlets, and wicked eyes. Respondent must be fair, good looking, fond of home, and have a good income.

J. D., twenty-four, 5ft. 9in., fair complexion, dark brown hair and whiskers, holding a responsible position in large works abroad, and with a good income. Respondent must be a lady, of good education, a good musician, domesticated, not exceed twenty-three, tall, with an in-

come, and no objection to going abroad; carter or changed.

LILLY, seventeen, medium height, fair, golden hair, and good looking. Would like to marry a loving young man, who must be dark, tall, and handsome, with not less than 200l. a year.

LIZ, tall, with dark eyes and hair, a good musician, and very domesticated. Would like to marry a tall gentleman, not younger than thirty-six, who is refined and steady.

MAY V., eighteen, tall, fair hair, laughing blue eyes, pretty, and domesticated. Respondent must be a tall dark gentleman, of good family; an officer in the army or navy preferred.

F. I. M., seventeen, tall, dark hair and eyes, accomplished, good looking, and ladylike. Respondent must be tall, fair, and good looking; a professional gentleman and a resident in London preferred.

JOHN, twenty-nine, tall, dark, good looking, and a blacksmith about to open a shop on his own account. Would like to marry a young woman about twenty-four, who is fair, good tempered, and able to look well after the house.

MARY ANNE, twenty-one, medium height, fair hair, blue eyes, industrious, and domesticated. Wishes to marry a young man in a respectable position, who must be about twenty-six, tall, fair, and good looking; a sailor preferred.

LINA, twenty, medium height, gray eyes, dark brown hair, good tempered, loving, fond of home, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, good looking, and be able to love and keep a wife; a mechanic not over thirty preferred.

MAGGIE AND EMILY—"Maggie," eighteen, tall, dark, and pretty. "Emily," tall, fair, and pretty; both musical and good singers. Respondents should be friends, tall and merry, with not less than a hundred a year.

G. H., thirty-one, 5ft. 3in., hazel eyes, brown hair, dark complexion, a clerk receiving 32s. per week, and with a few pounds laid by. Would be glad to correspond with some lady a few years younger than himself with the view of marriage.

SENAITH, thirty-five, medium height, brown hair and eyes, good tempered, and domesticated. Respondent must be about forty, sober, good tempered, and a member of the Church of England, able to earn from 30s. to 2l. a week; no objection to a widower if he has not more than two children.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LONESOME is responded to by—"Maggie," twenty, dark hair and eyes, good tempered, and has a little money.

BARBARA by—"Deceator," twenty-five, 5ft. 5in., steady, kind, and would prove worthy of her.

FRANCIS by—"M. H.," eighteen, fair, good looking, loving, and very fond of home.

HARRY HAWSER by—"Lonely Liz," brown hair, light eyes, industrious, and loves a sailor.

SCISSORS by—"A. Z.," who is bright and dark, with a warm, loving heart, and would make a good wife.

CLARENCE by—"Nellie M.," twenty-one, very loving, and domesticated.

A. W. W. by—"Jeannie," twenty-two, brown hair, blue eyes, would not object to leave England, and will have 100l. on her wedding-day.

ELLIOTT by—"Margaret," nineteen, medium height, dark, good looking, can play and sing, loving, and very fond of home.

WALDECOOT by—"Emily," eighteen, medium height, fair, fond of home and music, and would like the care of "Waldecoot."

OSCAR by—"Annie," seventeen, tall, fair complexion, gray eyes, abundant auburn hair, fine looking, domesticated, loving, and fond of home.

BOWSPRIT by—"L. A. H.," twenty-five, tall, fair, fond of home, domesticated, and would make a most loving wife to a deserving husband.

A. W. W. by—"Helen," nineteen, 5ft. 3 1/2 in., brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, will have a little money, and would like to go to America.

FRANK BLOSSOM by—"Vincent," twenty-one, 5ft. 10in., rather dark, well educated, in a rising position under Government.

RUTH AND EDITH by—"Ajax" and "Hector." "Ajax" is twenty-one, tall, fair, handsome, and holding a good situation. "Hector" is twenty-two, tall, dark, and in the Civil Service.

J. O. B. by—"A. M.," who answers to the advertised description, and has a great desire to go to Canada; and—"Louie," twenty-one, tall, fair hair, blue eyes, and rather stout, has an income of 60l. a year, and would much like to go abroad.

REJECTED COMMUNICATIONS.—The following cannot be inserted: "Daisy," "W. H. T.," "Ladies' Pet," "Chisel," and "T. E. W. P."

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